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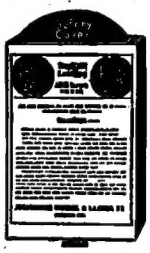

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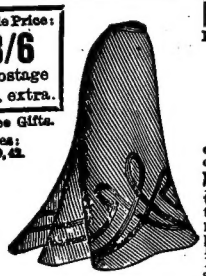

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SHORT STORIES

No. 795.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending March 26th, 1904.

A SOCIETY SECRET.

Relating How a Girl Resisted a Great Temptation, and What Resulted.

Containing the incident depicted on the cover.

LADY HARROW was dying. The great physician had looked into the bright, restless eyes and his face had grown very grave. He was gone now—gone to tell Lord Harrow of what was impending. His lordship's son was there, too—the only one in all that great house who bore his name. He had always been a spoilt son, yet everyone liked him and excused his faults. For Archie would be heir some day.

A sudden quiet stupor settled upon the sufferer. The eyes closed wearily, and a long-drawn sigh escaped the dry, parched lips. With noiseless feet, the nurses drew near the bed and waited. Among them stood a young girl, a friend of Lady Harrow's, who had devoted herself to the dying woman from the first moment of her illness.

The girl was very beautiful, with large, deep, grey eyes and a mass of fair, wavy hair that made her irresistibly attractive. There were times when the sick woman would let no one remain with her, save this beautiful girl, between whom and herself, despite the great disparity of their years, existed a strong and deep affection.

Once more the eyes opened and wandered from one to another of the group. Finally they rested on the fair face of Gladys Harcourt and a smile stole about the sufferer's mouth. With a gesture of the hand she waved the nurses aside, and beckoned to Gladys to stoop and listen to what she had to say. Gladys understood, and the ripe young lips quivered as she bent her head to listen.

"My dear child, I must tell you something before I die. Don't be frightened. I know I must die. Listen. I don't know how it is, dear, but I have always loved you as though you had been my own daughter. It seems now, as I lie here waiting for what is soon to come, that you are bound to me by some mysterious tie. It is to you, therefore, that I turn in this hour—to you that I make my final appeal. Gladys, my child, I have a sacred trust to leave behind me—a secret I must communicate before I go to another world. I will not burden you with the knowledge of that secret. It is too sad, too terrible, to lay upon so fair a head as thine. But I am afraid—afraid that justice may not be done where justice is due, afraid of the issue in the battle between conscience and expediency. Will you undertake to hold this trust for—for my sake?"

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Gladys bent her head till her warm, fresh lips rested upon those of the sufferer.

"If it will make you happy," she said in a low, musical voice.

"Oh, it will, it will! I cannot trust it to anyone but you!"

The patient's thin hand wandered beneath the pillows. When it reappeared, Gladys saw that it held a little sealed packet.

"Look!" whispered Lady Harrow. "I want you to take this—to keep it as you would your own honour. It means everything—*everything* to me. Can you read what I have written on the cover?"

Gladys took the little packet in her hand and read aloud the inscription thereon:

"*I, Margaret, Lady Harrow, commit this packet to the care of Gladys Harcourt, who is only to open it in the event of Lord Harrow's sudden death, or whenever my son, Archibald, shall inherit the title and estates of my husband. If Archibald becomes Lord Harrow during the lifetime of Gladys Harcourt, I hereby enjoin upon her the solemn duty of reading what is here inclosed and of taking whatsoever steps her conscience may dictate.*"

The young voice ceased.

"Will you promise to fulfil this obligation, my child?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. And may God, in His great mercy, keep all such dark and anxious secrets out of your own life. Kiss me once more, Gladys."

Again the lips of the two women met. A deep sigh came from the sufferer as she dropped her burning head upon the pillows. The flushed cheeks grew suddenly pallid, and Gladys, turning swiftly, beckoned the nurses to approach. But their skill was of no use now. Lady Harrow was dead.

And then, for the first time, Gladys became aware that Archibald Harrow was in the room. When he had entered it she did not know, but he had probably listened to the delivering of that last solemn trust so lately committed to her. He paid no heed to her, however, and stepped quietly up to the bed. Then, going to the door, he summoned his father. Gladys slipped noiselessly from the room and down the broad oak staircase to the deserted drawing-room. Her heart

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was full to overflowing, and she wanted to be alone. For she had loved the stately lady, who now lay in her last long sleep in the room upstairs, with a love as tender and strong as it had been strange and rare. She pressed the little sealed packet to her lips.

"Yes," she murmured, "I will keep the trust committed to me."

* * * * *

It was a year later, and Gladys Harcourt was seated in her daintily-furnished sitting-room, a copy of the *Times* in her hand. Suddenly she gave a start, while a little involuntary exclamation escaped her lips. The paragraph responsible for this agitation was of the briefest description, and ran as follows:—

"*While dining at the Carlton last evening, Lord Harrow was taken suddenly ill. He was conveyed with all speed to his own residence, where medical aid was summoned. Dr. Harvey Tremaine found his lordship to be the victim of a serious epileptic seizure, to which the sufferer succumbed in less than an hour after his return home. Lady Harrow, it will be remembered, died a year ago. His lordship's only son, Archibald, will now succeed to the title and estates of his father.*"

That was all. Yet what did the news involve? Gladys had not forgotten the packet which Lady Harrow had committed to her care. Had the time come for her to participate in that dark secret at which the dying woman had hinted? Going to her writing-case, she took the packet from a little secret compartment and again read its mysterious inscription.

"In the event of Lord Harrow's sudden death!"

Had some unaccountable premonition warned Lady Harrow of what was to befall her husband?

"Or whenever my son, Archibald, shall inherit the title and estates of my husband."

Gladys laid the packet down and began seriously to reflect upon what she should do. One of the conditions had already been fulfilled. The other would no doubt follow in the course of the next few days, and Archibald would be publicly recognised as Lord Harrow. Yes, there could no longer be any reason for her to remain in ignorance of this mysterious secret. To do so would be to violate the trust which Lady Harrow had reposed in her. Once more she took up the packet, and, this time, she broke the seal.

For upwards of two hours Gladys remained in her sitting-room. No one interrupted her, for the door of the room was locked. Her face was very white, her hands were trembling, and the traces of tears were in her deep, grey eyes. For the first time in all her life Gladys Harcourt knew that she stood on the brink of a great crisis. A secret not mysterious now, but fraught with many important and serious possibilities, was in her keeping. And these possibilities depended upon her. Honour, justice, truth—all three were at stake. And it was she who must cast the die. Yet was this the wish of Lady Harrow? Once more she took up the brief little note, written by Lady Harrow to herself, and which had been inclosed with the documents contained in the packet. But it contained no more than was expressed in the last six words of that faded inscription:—

"*Whatsoever steps her conscience may dictate.*"

Her conscience? Then, cost what it might, she must speak out! She must repair the wrong that had been done—must give to the world the secret that was now hers, and hers alone. She rose resolutely to her feet. It was evening, and she remembered a promise to dine at Lady Seymour's. Summoning her maid, she went to her dressing-room, where she attired herself for dinner. Then, wrapping a soft opera-cloak about her white shoulders, she descended the stairs to the carriage. On the steps she was accosted by a messenger, who placed in her hand a letter directed to herself. She opened it under the light in the wide hall, and read the following request:—

"*Selgrove Gardens, S.W.*

"Dear Madam,—*I have a communication to make to you which is of the gravest importance. Can you call here this evening and as early as possible? I will not detain you for more than a few minutes. Perhaps it may influence you somewhat if I hint that my business with you to-night is connected with the recent death of Lord Harrow.—Yours faithfully,*

"Geoffrey Barton."

Geoffrey Barton! Where had she heard that name before? Gladys considered as she refolded the note and returned it to its envelope. Enlightenment was not long in coming. All the world knew that Archibald, now Lord Harrow, was engaged to pretty, piquante Madeline Barton, the belle of the season. The Bartons were fabulously rich, though their lineage and descent were neither so ancient nor yet so unimpeachable as their more aristocratic neighbours could have wished. But when the sun is golden, the sun-spots are not observed, so the Bartons were regarded as very fine people indeed.

Without further reflection, Gladys entered the carriage.

"Drive to Selgrove Gardens," she said to the footman. "I suppose you know Mr. Barton's house?"

The man touched his hat, and, in a few minutes, Gladys was bowling along in the direction of the Bartons'. The carriage drew up before a large house, the door of which flew open as Gladys alighted.

It was evident she had been expected. Without a moment's delay she was conducted to a small study on the first floor, where she found Geoffrey Barton awaiting her. He was a gentlemanly-looking man of fifty or thereabouts, and he looked up as she entered with a curious alertness of expression that made the girl stand still before him. He got up and placed a chair for her. But she declined it with a wave of her hand, and he again sat down.

"Miss Harcourt," he began, "let me first of all thank you for responding so promptly to my appeal. It would be foolish to waste time in useless preliminaries. Let me, therefore, come to the point without delay. Lady Harrow's last act in this world was to intrust to your care some papers which nearly affected the name and fortunes of her family. We—I say *we*, since I am now acting with the full concurrence of the present Lord Harrow—we have good reasons the belief that these documents contained information of a very grave nature—a—a secret, in fact, which ought, or ought not, to remain a secret until the end of time.

"We are ignorant as yet of the precise nature of this secret. The present Lord Harrow overheard his late mother commit it to your keeping, and from her manner upon that occasion I infer that the secret, whatever it is, is one that should be well kept. I say *I* think this. Archibald is inclined to attribute his mother's earnestness to the mere fancies of a disordered brain. But I am a man of the world, Miss Harcourt, and have seen many strange things brought to light that need never have been known. So when Archibald casually mentioned the circumstances to me I made a few inquiries, and these inquiries, though amounting to very little, have led me to the present step. Do you follow me?"

His eyes fixed themselves on the girl's pale face. She could not speak, and merely nodded in reply.

"That is well," resumed Geoffrey Barton coolly. "Well, my first conclusion is this: For the sake of all concerned the secret, whatever it is, should be buried so deep that it can never again be resurrected. And, to this end, the documents now in your possession should be handed over to the present Lord Harrow."

Gladys started back as she heard the words.

"Never!" she cried. "He is the last man who should have them! He would destroy them!"

Geoffrey Barton's eyes were watching her.

"Ah!" he said. "It is as I suspected, then! So you have acquired the secret yourself, Miss Harcourt?"

"Oh, yes, yes! I heard only to-day of the late Lord Harrow's death, and this was one of the conditions of my opening the packet. Oh, I wish Lady Harrow had not left the secret with me!"

"Precisely." Geoffrey Barton's tone was well measured. His lynx-like eyes were still upon her face. "I am now

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strengthened in the opinion I lately expressed. The papers in question should be in the hands of the present Lord Harrow. Pray don't interrupt. Now let me touch, as delicately as possible, on a more private matter. I am given to understand, Miss Harcourt, that you have engaged yourself to a gentleman whose position is not yet assured. I believe you have endured some opposition on account of this circumstance. Personally, I regret I have not had the pleasure of meeting Mr. de Chirer. But from what I have been fortunate enough to glean as to his character and abilities, I may venture the opinion that his unquestionable genius as an artist will bring him the success his talents and perseverance merit. But success is a long ladder. Don't you think, Miss Harcourt, that the way might be paved for him were he the possessor of say, a nice, snug little competency ?"

Gladys' cheeks were burning now. He was tempting her.

"What do you mean ?" she gasped.

Geoffrey Barton laid one hand on her arm.

"Will you sell your secret for fifty thousand pounds ?" he asked in a cool, level voice.

Gladys started back as she heard the words.

"Oh, no, no, no !" she gasped. "I dare not ! You know I dare not ! Oh, let me go !"

She moved swiftly towards the door as Geoffrey Barton rose.

"Well," he said, "think it over. If you alter your mind come here in two days' time, and you shall have a cheque. It would be a good thing for Mr. de Chirer, you know. Good-bye."

* * * *

It was the afternoon of the second day when Gladys Harcourt alighted from a hansom at the door of Mr. de Chirer's studio in Kensington. She was admitted at once, and in a few minutes was in the presence of the artist himself. In spite of his name, Gordon de Chirer looked every inch an Englishman. Tall, well knit, with frank, open face and honest blue eyes, he made by far the best picture in that well-lit studio.

"Well, this is an honour I little expected !" he exclaimed, as his eye fell on Gladys. "Couldn't have timed it better, either. I've been at it all day, and was just wishing my presence at your father's residence was not regarded as so very undesirable a thing."

He laughed as he wheeled a chair for Gladys up to the glowing fire. But she made him no reply, and, when she was seated, he bent over her and tenderly smoothed the rich, clustering hair upon her fair head.

"What is it, darling ?" he asked. "Is it something I can help in ?"

She lifted her face to his.

"You are quick to understand, dear," she said, as she put her lips up to be kissed. "Yes, it is something in which you may help. I cannot tell you all, Gordon, for it is a secret, and the secret is not mine, but another's. But I can tell you sufficient to make you comprehend my difficulty, and help you to counsel me as to what it is my duty to do."

Gordon nodded, and drew a chair for himself beside her own.

"A year ago," went on Gladys, "a certain lady of title died. She and I were much attached, and before she died she committed to me a great family secret. This secret I was not to know unless her husband were to die suddenly, or until her son should inherit the title and estates of his father. Two days ago the fulfilment of one of these conditions compelled me to acquaint myself with the family secret. It was indeed a very grave and serious one, involving more than I can tell you. The same evening I received a note from a certain gentleman, requesting me to call upon him. I went, and was astonished to find that, though he knew little as to the nature of the secret itself, he was quite aware of its existence, and even of its importance. Finally he urged me to place the documents connected with the secret in the hands of the present head of the family, and offered me a cheque for fifty thousand pounds as an inducement to do this. He gave me two days in which to consider, and that time has now expired. Of course, I am not thinking of the money, Gordon. Nor do I think I ought to part with those papers to any but a respectable firm of solicitors, who would do what they thought right and just in so weighty a matter. But I felt I must come first to you and see if your view of the case coincides with my own."

She stopped. Gordon de Chirer had risen, and was now standing by the window, with his back turned towards her. It seemed quite a long time ere he made any reply. Presently, however, he moved back to the chair he had vacated. There was a far-away light in his blue eyes as he put the question :

"You must tell me one thing, Gladys. What was the name of the lady who died a year ago ? Was it Harrow ?"

Gladys started.

"Yes," she said. "How did you guess it, Gordon ?"

But Gordon passed the question by. Once more he rose from his seat, and this time began to pace the floor restlessly. Gladys watched him, wondering greatly as she did so. But she wisely forbore to question him further, and merely waited for him to speak. Presently he stopped before her.

"Gladys," he said, "did I understand you rightly ? Did you not say that two days had now elapsed ?"

"Yes."

"Will you do as I bid you ? Can you trust me—implicitly ?"

Gladys was on her feet in an instant.

"Trust you !" she exclaimed. "Of course I can trust you !"

"Yes, I know, darling. But can you trust me in this ? Can you trust me so far that you will do whatever I ask you to do, without question or hesitation of any kind ?"

Gladys looked into his face. She had never before seen him quite like this. He was usually so gay and full of wit and merriment. Now he seemed suddenly sobered. There was a gravity, a dignity, in the frank, fearless face that was new to it, and Gladys marvelled as to what this might portend. But there was no hesitancy in the answer she gave him. Putting her two hands trustingly in his, she looked full into his blue eyes.

"I will do as you bid me," she said.

Once more Gordon de Chirer stooped and kissed the girl's red lips. Then he asked :

"Have you the papers on you ?"

"No."

"Then we must drive to your home first. I will wait for you, and we will then go together to the gentleman who made you the offer of fifty thousand pounds for the secret."

A momentary doubt shot through the girl's brain.

"Gordon," she whispered faintly, "you do not want me to—to sell the papers ?"

But Gordon only smiled.

"Come," he said. "I want to see this thing through, once and for all."

In a few minutes they were bowling over the smooth, asphalted streets. Near Gladys' house the hansom drew up, and Gordon waited until she returned with the papers. Then on again till they reached Selgrove Gardens, and the hansom drew up before Geoffrey Barton's house.

Geoffrey Barton was in his library. He seemed a trifle

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disconcerted at the inclusion of Gordon de Chirer into the business in hand. His lifted eyebrows implied a question, which Gladys promptly answered.

"I had better explain," she said, "that, but for Mr. de Chirer, I should not have returned to you at all. I went to him this afternoon for the purpose of seeking his advice on this matter, and, acting upon that advice, I have accompanied him here."

"How much or how little does Mr. de Chirer know of this business, Miss Harcourt?"

Gladys was about to reply when Gordon saved her the necessity.

"Miss Harcourt has informed me," he explained, "that she is in possession of a secret for which you have offered her the sum of fifty thousand pounds. I have also elicited from her the additional information that this secret is connected with the family of the late Lord Harrow. Beyond this she has told me nothing, nor have I sought to compel her confidence in any way."

A shade of relief passed over Geoffrey Barton's face.

"And your object in accompanying Miss Harcourt?" he inquired suavely.

"That will appear presently," responded Gordon. "First of all, I wish to ask you one question. Is the fifty thousand pounds you are prepared to pay for this secret to come out of the estate of the present Lord Harrow?"

"That is, or appears to be, rather immaterial. But, since you ask, I will admit that Lord Harrow has notified me of his willingness to pay that amount out of the estate."

"Thank you. Will you be so good then as to draw up a document explaining the particulars of this transaction and append your signature to the same? I suppose Lord Harrow is wise enough to keep *his* name out of the affair?"

Geoffrey Barton coloured.

"Well, yes," he admitted lamely. "Lord Harrow does not wish to appear in the matter. I am prepared to draw a cheque for the amount on my own bankers, and he will pay me later. But I scarcely see the necessity of putting the transaction down in black and white. You see, it's not a—a regular business proposal, and it would not look altogether—er—businesslike——"

"Or honourable," suggested Gordon. "Nevertheless, I insist upon it. I will draw up a receipt for Miss Harcourt, and shall affix my own name as a witness to the transaction. You will please to make out the cheque. But, in doing so, allow me to request you to leave out the name of the person to whom the money is to be paid."

Geoffrey Barton was becoming more and more embarrassed. He was no more able to divine the drift of these preparations than Gladys herself. He had never met this Gordon de Chirer before, but he felt himself irresistibly compelled to carry out his directions to the very letter. For a few moments nothing more was heard save the scratching of pens as they moved rapidly over the paper. Then the two men looked up. Gordon had just finished a blank receipt, to which he had affixed his name as witness. The name was covered by a sheet of blotting-paper when Geoffrey Barton lifted his head. Up to this time Gladys had offered no protest. But she could no longer restrain her uneasiness.

"Oh, Gordon," she exclaimed, "think what you are doing. It is wrong—worse than wrong—it is wicked!"

But Gordon only smiled.

"Give Mr. Barton the papers," he said.

But Gladys shook her head and drew away from the table.

"Trust me."

The words fell on her ear, and she looked helplessly into the face of her lover. It was a strong face—a noble face—and she obeyed. Geoffrey Barton snatched greedily at the papers and Gordon lifted the blotting-paper from the blank receipt.

"Sign it," he said, as he pushed it towards her.

Gladys took the pen from his hand and prepared to write. All at once a smothered exclamation burst from her lips. Her eyes dilated and fixed themselves on the paper before her. Observing her agitation, the eyes of Geoffrey Barton followed hers and rested on the name that Gordon de Chirer had inscribed thereon. For it was not Gordon de Chirer, but Gordon Harrow! For some time no one spoke. Then Gladys took up the receipt and tore it into fragments.

"I will never sign away your inheritance," she cried. "Oh, why did you force me to give up those papers—the sole remaining proofs of your identity?"

Gordon laid a soothing hand on her shoulder. Then turning to the petrified Geoffrey Barton, he commanded him to fill in his own name on the cheque. When this was done, he wrote a second receipt, handed it across the table, and put the cheque in his pocket.

"Now, Mr. Barton," he said, when he had finished, "I will make you an explanation. Thirty years ago my father, Lord Harrow, married my mother and took her for a long honeymoon trip on the Continent. While there circumstances made it expedient that they should retire for a time to a little sequestered hamlet in the vicinity of Lombardy, where they dropped their identity. In due time I was born into the world, and, not long after, my father and mother returned to Society once more, leaving me in the care of an excellent nurse.

"My father insisted that my birth should be kept secret. There was no stint of money, and I received an education quite in keeping with my real station in life. But I was brought up in complete ignorance with regard to my parentage, and it was not until I was eighteen years of age that my father wrote to me. He told me then of the miserable circumstances attending my birth, together with a great deal more, into which I need not now enter.

"He admitted that I was his actual heir, though the world had no idea of my existence. Finally he left it to me to do as I thought fit. My mother had prayed for my return and recognition, notwithstanding all that such a step would involve. And he left the issue to me. The week that followed was the bitterest I have ever spent. And in the end I ran away."

He paused, and then went on:

"I determined never to return. I had never known a mother's love. Yet I felt for that mother, all unknown as she was to me, and I vowed never to let my own selfish inclinations tempt me into forgetting that she *was* my mother. So I travelled up and down the Continent under my present name, and finally established myself here as an artist. Now you know my story.

"Here is the letter my father sent me. Take it, and, with it, the only remaining proof that I, and not my brother Archibald, am Lord Harrow. Let him keep the title, and all that appertains thereunto, in quietness of mind. I shall not trouble him. His cheque for fifty thousand pounds I shall take. He owes me something for my willingness to sacrifice so much. Yet it is not for him that I do it, but for the fair, sweet name of my dead mother—the mother I never knew."

He rose as he finished speaking. Gladys rose too, and drew near him. There were tears in her deep, grey eyes as they met his. Unmindful of the presence of Geoffrey Barton, Gordon drew her towards him.

"Are you content?" he asked tenderly.

"More than content. I am happy."

Presently she lifted her head.

"Why did you choose the name of de Chirer?" she asked.

"It is only French for Harrow," he replied. "I wonder you did not see through it before."

"Shall you keep it?"

"Yes—if you will share it. Will you?"

"Oh, you know I will!"

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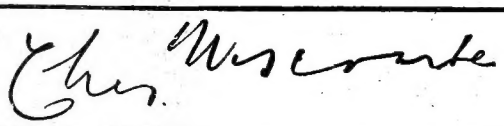
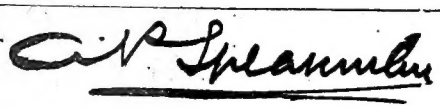
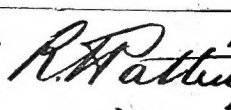
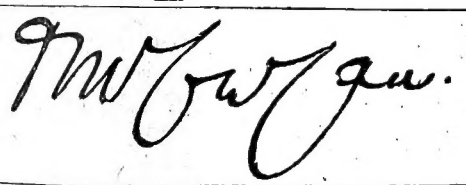
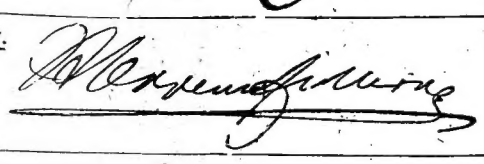
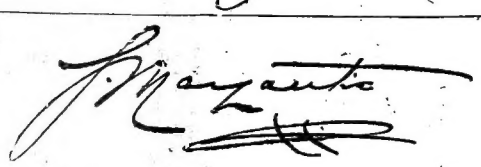
No. 13. 	
No. 14. 	
No. 15. 	
No. 16. 	
No. 17. 	
No. 18. 	

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The Wage-Robber.

A TALE OF LAKE WINDERMERE.

"Well," said the ironmaster after a long pause, "we will afford you every opportunity of practically demonstrating your idea. You shall have a private room fitted up, with a pulley and shaft from the main engine. In this you will be able to carry out the work, free both from interruption and the prying eyes of curious and, I think, not over-sympathetic engineers."

The ironmaster paused and looked meaningly into the face of Hume Meredith. But the glance he met was grim and determined.

"I am not blind to the antagonism I shall have to endure," was the quiet reply. "It is not easy to convince men such as those with whom I work. They think and live for the hour, and a policy of eternal benefit at the cost of six months' half-pay is one they will fight, and fight hard. Still, I will take the risk." And he smiled his quiet, determined smile and looked straight into the strong face of the great ironmaster.

"Well," said the latter, as he looked once more at the tracings on his desk, "the more I consider the scheme, the more I anticipate the success which you predict. I am not usually so optimistic in new ideas, but I must admit that this one of yours is a revelation. If it can be demonstrated, the trade will be revolutionised, and the patentees will secure the whole of the Government contracts. Indeed, they will hold the monopoly, and Britain will take from Germany all that she has lost, and more." He paused, and then added drily: "But the biggest task of all will be to convince the five hundred men who work in the shops of the value of this invention *to them*. The machine, if it does anything, will minimise labour to one-fifth of the present rate, and even the gospel of ultimate good will have no amelioration for this circumstance. They will put their nose against it from the outset, and we shall have to fight. As you have yourself hinted, they live as they are paid—by the hour."

Hume Meredith was still smiling. He was not the man to be lightly daunted.

"Well," he said, "we are not children to be frightened by bogies or goblins. We are men, and though we differ widely in station—you, an ironmaster, and I, a mere mechanic—the instincts of the man exist equally in both. And—I am determined."

The ironmaster rose.

"Well," he said, "you shall have my assistance and, if necessary, my protection. And, if the scheme succeeds, your reward will be a big one."

For the first time in his life, the great ironmaster offered his hand to an employée. Hume Meredith took it and returned the grasp which he received. For once in his life, the famous ironmaster realised that, under the dark blue tunic of one of his engineers beat a heart as brave as that of a lion. And—far more even than that—the man was a genius.

The men were at work in the great engineering shop of the Windermere ironmaster. The whirr of wheels, the clank of cogs, the lap-lap of link belts, and, far down to the end of the long shop, the deep rumble of the main engine and the groaning of its great fly-wheel. All was bustle and activity. Men with grimy faces and dark blue suits stooped over lathe and boring-machine, guiding the sharp steel tools that ground into the iron so tightly bolted to the moving machines. Drills spun round and round and cut their way through huge plates, while the hot twisted filings dropped on to the floor below. Fitters stood at their vices along the great bench, and the rasp of their files grated on the ear. Every man was at work, but, somehow, they were thinking of other things. Something ominous was in the air, and the ironmaster, entering the workshop, observed it in an instant. But he paid no heed to it, for he understood its cause. A scowl was on every man's face, and muttered threats were beginning to be heard. Across the yard was a small wooden shed, with galvanised iron roof, and, as the men glanced momentarily through the windows of the workshop to where it stood, their faces darkened and their scowls deepened. The ironmaster went out and crossed the yard.

"The brute!" growled Ambrose Drew, as he straightened himself above his boring-machine. "He means to take the bread out of our mouths and the mouths of our wives and children. And the firm encourages him in his infernal invention. He was too proud to mix with us when he worked here, and now——" He ground his teeth and was silent.

Leonard Steele moved stealthily over to his side.

"There are five hundred of us," he whispered hoarsely, "and we're all of one mind. Are we going to submit to it without a protest?"

"What's the use of a protest?" growled Ambrose angrily.

Leonard Steele laughed softly.

"I didn't mean that kind of a protest," he said meaningly. "But it isn't always safe to use ugly words when others will do, though the meaning may be the same." And his eye gleamed with a sinister significance.

Ambrose Drew stooped again over his machine. When he next lifted his head, he looked full into Steele's dark face.

"Spread it among such of the men as we can trust," he whispered. "Tell 'em we'll meet to discuss what is to be done at eleven o'clock to-night in the grove by the lake. He's taken to sleeping in his shed now, for fear his precious invention should be tampered with. I heard him tell the chief to-day that the machine would be finished in three days."

Leonard Steele smiled significantly.

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," he said. "I think we shall be able to move the men to our way of thinking. We must stop him. And if he won't stop——" He passed his hand across his mouth and shot a quick glance into his companion's face.

Ambrose Drew nodded and the two men returned to their work. But all that day there were ominous whisperings among the men of the great workshop, and a secret understanding seemed to grow up between them that boded ill for the young inventor in the shed hard by.

It was eight o'clock when Hume Meredith, locking the door of his little workshop behind him, went out of the great gate and down the road to the lake. It was now dark, for the season was autumn, but a soft stillness reigned with the night, which the contrast of the day served but to intensify. It was not often now that Hume Meredith left his workshop, for he well knew what was the prevailing feeling against both

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himself and the invention upon which he was engaged. But there are other things in life than genius and ambition, and, of these, love is not the least.

Lake Windermere looked very calm and peaceful as he stood by its brink and watched the moonlight silvering its waters. He took off his cap and let the cool night air play among his thick crisp hair. There was a soft step behind him and he turned abruptly.

"Ah, Nora," he said, taking her hand in his, "so it's you, dear. It is only three days since we last met, yet it seems an age. I think the continual toil in the workshop and my inability to leave it even at night make the time seem longer than it is. Well, how have you been getting on?"

Nora Langham smiled up into her lover's face.

"Oh, all right," she said. "And you? Is the work nearly done?"

Hume Meredith lifted his head proudly.

"Three days more, at most," he said triumphantly.

"And the end?" she asked eagerly.

"The farther I go," was the glad reply, "the more certain do I become that the invention will be an unqualified success."

There was a short pause, and then Nora said in a low voice:

"Hume, you must be on your guard. I have heard dark hints among the men that almost frighten me. Oh, why can't they see that the invention, while it lessens labour, will ultimately bring the demand up so high that they will not be able to cope with it? They seem so short-sighted, and they will not hearken even though one tells them all that it means. They look askance even at me, for they know we love each other, and hate me because of you."

Hume Meredith looked earnestly into the girl's blue eyes.

"So to love me is to suffer," he said, with a tender light in his.

Nora looked up quickly. Then she put up her face to be kissed.

"Then I hope I may always suffer," she said, as she returned his kiss. "Nay, dear Hume, it is not of myself I think. The only thought their attitude to me awakens is one of apprehension for you and for the success of your work."

Again Hume Meredith kissed the ripe lips. The spot was very lonely, and the trees that overhung the lake screened them from observation.

"My darling," he said tenderly, "I am not ignorant of the opposition I have to face. So far I have met it and overcome it—not by aggressiveness, but by sheer force of will. I have ignored every insult that has been levelled against me. I have shown them that no power on earth is strong enough to move my purpose or deter me from successfully carrying out this work. And this I am going to continue to the end. Obstacles there may be—even danger—but the end will be the same."

Slowly they walked along the margin of the moonlit lake, and, when love had made them happy and hopeful, they separated, and Hume Meredith returned to his little wooden workshop.

* * * * *

It was eleven o'clock. The tall trees of the grove stood up silent and spectral, and the pale light of the moon filtered through the foliage and made lacework-patterns on the green sward beneath. Figures, as silent as the trees, but movable, flitted from cover to cover, as though to avoid notice, and made their way to a little copse on the borders of the lake. The few became a group, and the group swelled to a crowd. Each man's face wore a dark scowl, and pity seemed a thing unknown. For a time, scarcely a whisper was to be heard, and then, in clear but low tones, the voice of Leonard Steele broke the silence, and every man listened to his words.

"Men," he said, "our first duty is towards the helpless women and children for whom we have to provide. There is no man here who would be less than a man more thoroughly in the eyes of us all than by neglecting to do that. Our wives, our mothers, our little ones—all compel us to strive for the continuance of that labour by which we are able to support them. Is it not so?"

There was a subdued murmur among his hearers, and the hands that grasped sticks grasped them more firmly.

"Just so," Steele went on. "I see you all agree with me on that score. Well, a traitor—a black-hearted, favour-seeking traitor—has crept in among us, and is working, day and night, to accomplish that by which four-fifths of you will be rendered penniless, homeless ruined!" His voice rose as he spoke the words. "You will be driven out like sheep—worse than sheep, for they but go to unconscious death, while you will go to conscious misery, conscious hunger, and the women and children whom you love will droop and die and call to you for bread."

Again he paused. There were cries of "Lynch him!" "Lynch him!" from several of the group, and the muttered imprecations increased each instant. Then the voice of Ambrose Drew rose above the rest, and there was silence again.

"Men," he said, "there is only one course left to us. We must force him to desist. Listen! I am no lover of violence if other means will do. Let us send him a note, commanding him to cease this work, and let us earn our bread as before. Give him four-and-twenty hours to decide, and then——" He stopped. The murmurs around him encouraged him to proceed. "Well," he said, in a lower voice, "if he will not heed us, *make him!*"

Once more the murmurs broke out, and fierce discussions took place among the crowd. At last Leonard Steele spoke again:

"Well," he said, "are you agreed?"

"We are!" came from a hundred throats.

"Bravely said, my men. For in this you have shown us you be indeed men—men who will fight for right and justice. Four-and-twenty hours, then. If, then, he does not desist, we will show this—— What shall we call him, lads?"

Ambrose Drew was the first to speak.

"The Wage-Robber!" he said.

There was a fierce cry from the angry crowd. In an instant they took up the word and repeated it in fierce, suppressed whispers.

"The Wage-Robber! The Wage-Robber!"

Without further parley, Ambrose Drew wrote a short note to Hume Meredith, giving him four-and-twenty hours to desist from the completion of his new invention, which he gave to one of the men with orders to slip it beneath a door of the little workshop. And then the crowd dispersed and went each man to his own home.

* * *

Another night had fallen on the broad, calm lake, whose waters bore scarcely a ripple on their unbroken surface. Once more the silver moon rode high in the purple sky, and the trees, as the night before, now swayed gently in the soft breeze. It was midnight and a deep silence lay upon the scene. Suddenly the wind brought the murmur of many voices, and shadowy

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outlines moved among the trees that fringed the shore of the lake. Nearer and nearer they came—a furious, frenzied crowd, and their voices, suppressed as they were, told of the passion that had roused them. They were dragging someone along—someone who fought desperately with his captors, but who was powerless to free himself from their grasp.

"Cowards!" he said. "How well ye merit the name when ye come out, a hundred strong, to fight one man!"

But they paid him no heed and dragged him on to the edge of the lake. There they pinioned him with strong cords, and Ambrose Drew stepped before him.

"Well, Hume Meredith," he said grimly, "we gave you fair and timely warning, and you have not heeded it. I will give you one more chance. Will you swear to relinquish the work upon which you are now engaged?"

The captive looked him full and fearlessly in the face.

"No!" he said resolutely. "A thousand times no! You may do your worst, but you cannot alter my determination."

There was an execration from the crowd.

"We may not be able to alter it," said Leonard Steele significantly, "but we can put an end to it."

"How?" Hume laughed.

Leonard Steele laughed.

"Dead people aren't very determined," he said.

"I'll take my chance," was the reply. "But I won't yield."

There was an angry oath from the crowd.

"Bring up the boat!" said Steele. "We'll damp his ardour a bit and see if that makes any impression. I guess his machine will need an inventor by to-morrow morning!"

A dozen men ran to a boat-house hard by, and drew therefrom a small rowing-boat, which they dragged to the spot where their captive stood.

Ambrose Drew took out a brace and bit, and with it bored a hole in the bottom of the boat. A score of hands hoisted the pinioned man into the boat, where they drew him, feet foremost, beneath the seats, to which they bound him securely. Then, in response to a whispered order from Steele, four men hurried off in the direction of the foundry, and presently returned, bearing two huge bars of pig-iron. Both of these they laid beside the unfortunate man, in order to weigh down the boat. Then, with a suppressed shout and many oaths, they ran the boat down into the water, wading out waist-deep in order to push it far out into the lake.

Slowly but surely it moved out into deeper water, and the men scrambled back to the shore. Then, for the first time, the voice of Hume Meredith called for help, and the men remembered that, in their excitement, they had forgotten to gag him. But they could not reach him now, and they slunk back to their homes.

"Fifteen minutes will do it," murmured Leonard Steele to himself, as he moved away. "No help can reach him in that time. Good-bye, brave Wage-Robber, and a pleasant journey to you!" And he disappeared into the night.

* * * * *

Nora Langham was lying awake in her own room not a mile from the spot where her lover was in danger of his life, bound hand and foot, in a boat that was ready to sink and carry him to a watery grave. She was restless and uneasy. Vague fears came to trouble her and to rob her of her rest.

Presently she heard stealthy footsteps pass her window, then another, and again another. Fearful of she knew not what, she went to the window and peered out.

A man was passing, and he glanced up as he went by. It was Ambrose Drew.

In an instant, she realised that something was afoot which threatened her lover. Hastily dressing, she stole out of the house in the direction he had taken. There were others in the street, all making their way in the same direction, and she followed, being careful, however, to avoid notice.

Soon she entered the grove that led down to the lake. Here she found a number of men already assembled, and she hid herself behind one of the trees where she might stand in shadow and watch what was going forward. There was a sound of disturbance a little way off, and, a few moments later, she saw, to her horror, the form of her lover dragged down to the margin of the lake.

Almost stupefied, she watched the horrible proceedings of the men, and saw Hume Meredith and his leaky craft launched upon the lake. And then the men slunk away, and she only remained. Paralysed almost beyond action, she stood there stupidly, knowing not what to do. And then that voice—his voice—calling for help, smote upon her ear and recalled her to herself.

Two or three minutes she waited, to make sure all the men had left the spot, and then she leapt from her concealment and bounded down to the brink of the lake. Quick as thought, she had resolved upon what to do. Tying her garments about her as well as she could, so as not to impede her movements in the water, she dashed into the lake and swam vigorously out to the boat. She was a good swimmer, but the boat was a long way off. Again that cry for help, and, even as it was uttered, she reached the boat.

"Hume," she said, "it is I—Nora! Have you got your knife?"

"Yes," he replied, "it is in my pocket—the one on your side."

"Thank God!" she said fervently, and, reaching over the boat, she felt for it and drew it out. The water was in the boat now, almost to the man's mouth, and a great fear came into the girl's heart as she felt the boat sinking lower and lower and the water swallowing up her lover.

With a supreme effort, she mastered her hysterical weakness and slashed at the cords that bound him. One by one they snapped, and, when at last one hand was free, Hume took the knife and severed the remaining ropes. He held his breath now, for the water was over his face, and each effort drove him almost to madness. But at last the cords were all severed, and slowly and carefully, for he feared the too sudden foundering of the little craft, he drew himself out from beneath the seats where he had been bound and dropped into the lake beside Nora.

Almost as he did so, the boat, weighted with the bars of pig-iron, disappeared beneath the surface. With a great effort, they avoided the eddy thus caused, and swam silently to shore. And then, her task accomplished, her lover saved,

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Nora Langham sank down on the bank and burst into tears. Hume bent over her and kissed her.

"You have saved my life, darling," he said. "Thank God you were in time!" And, lifting her tenderly up, he led her home.

* * * * * *

Once more Hume Meredith sat in the private office of the great ironmaster. A solicitor was also seated at an adjoining desk.

"Well," said the ironmaster, "we have won, after all. The men are beginning to see the benefit which this invention of yours is to themselves as well as to us. But it was a near thing for you. Had it not been for that plucky little sweetheart of yours, I'm afraid the firm would have lost a prospective partner."

Hume Meredith started. His handsome face flushed. What was he meant to infer? The ironmaster noticed his start of surprise and smiled.

"Yes," he said, "I want a partner to help me in the work. If you will consent to put your head into the business, I shall be satisfied. You have a patent and no capital, and I have capital and a very prosperous business. How much of that prosperity would decline were you to fight me with your patent I am not prepared to admit. But I hope you will not do that. Have the patent rights made out in the name of Outram and Meredith, and I will make over to you an equal share in this business, present and future. What do you say?"

Hume Meredith rose, and this time it was he who offered his hand.

"You are more than generous," he said. The ironmaster shook his head.

"Not a bit of it," he said. "In five years' time you will realise that you are benefiting me, not I you. This is the very biggest thing that has ever happened to the trade. Already the German contracts are being thrown out, and we—we were the gainers."

For nearly an hour they sat thus, the solicitor taking legal instructions meanwhile.

When at last Hume Meredith rose, the ironmaster took a decanter from the sideboard and poured out three glasses of wine.

"To the new firm," he said. "It is an old one—as old as this wine—but to-day is the best and most profitable day in all its history."

Hume Meredith bowed.

"And I," he said, "having experienced the pleasure of working for a clear-sighted ironmaster who has encouraged me in all the labours I have undertaken, am now more highly honoured than in the wildest dreams I have ever anticipated. If the little genius for invention I possess is valued so highly as to place me upon a pinnacle I had never even hoped to reach, I will at least couple it with an integrity and energy towards the still further advancement of the business of which I am now a member, that shall prove a generous deed to be a deed politic."

"Well said!" the ironmaster replied. "Now, I shall expect you to-night at dinner. And my wife desired me particularly to ask you to bring with you the young lady, but for whose bravery, in the face of so many foes, we should all have been losers."

So Hume promised. And, for the first time in her life, Nora Langham sat down to dinner in the ironmaster's great house, and enjoyed a foretaste of that wealth and prosperity that were to follow her all the days of her life.

For the firm of Outram and Meredith has prospered beyond the dreams of avarice, and its partners are the wealthiest ironmasters in the land.

Nora saw a number of hands hoist her lover into the leaky boat, where they bound him securely.

And what of the men who so nearly robbed Hume of his life? They soon understood the huge advantages of the new invention, and became ashamed of their cowardice on that eventful night. Leonard Steele and Ambrose Drew, the ringleaders, publicly apologised, and the most prized of all the wedding-gifts that fell to the lot of Mr. and Mrs. Hume Meredith was the present from the employés to their master and erstwhile companion, whom they learnt to love and trust so well.

J. M. W.

"Don't you dare kiss me!" she cried warningly. "Why, I wasn't thinking of such a thing," he said. "Well, I was," she replied firmly.

Minnie: "Did you sing for Mr. Goodcatch last night, dear?" Winnie: "Yes, love, for nearly an hour." Minnie: "Oh, I'm so glad, darling; I always detested that man."

She was very angry, and he as cool as a cucumber. She: "Sir, I will give you a piece of my mind——" He: "For Heaven's sake, my love, don't think of it; the last time you did that you left yourself only a small fragment. Please don't rashly run yourself into mental bankruptcy."

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DECOYED.

A STRIKING SERIES OF SOCIETY REVELATIONS.

TOLD BY THE DECOY HERSELF.

TWELFTH EPISODE.

A Daring Scheme.

My real father alive! It seemed incredible! Yet there were actually tears of excitement in Dr. Farnie's eyes, and there was no doubting the eagerness in his voice when he gave me the news.

"Let me go to him at once!" I pleaded. "Wherever he is, he must be sorely in need of the love I can give him. I have never been able to feel a daughter's affection for the man who sent word to Bochum for me to join him, for I felt repelled at first sight of him. But my own dear father—why, I know exactly what he must be like! Oh, let me go to him now!"

"I ought not to have told you this yet," was the doctor's troubled response. "You are so excited that you will ruin everything."

On the instant I curbed both excitement and outward impatience. If either one or the other was calculated to work harm, it should be seen that I knew how to avoid doing that, and it was a comparatively calm girl who listened to the directions now given her.

"As you value your own welfare and that of your unfortunate father," he said, "you will avoid betraying any knowledge you have gained from me. At all hazards I must pass another night under this roof, for I have still some work uncompleted which is very important indeed. Certain papers have to be secured, and if I can gain possession of them, your father will in future enjoy the income which is his by right, but of which he has for years been robbed. I have located the papers, and hope to have them in my possession before morning. All will then be ready for our departure. But if you quit the house I shall be deprived of my opportunity, and your father will be ruined."

Dr. Farnie's manner impressed me so much by its naturalness and its anxious tone that I believed every word he said, and readily promised to obey all his injunctions.

"Very well," he said. "I will go downstairs and will tell Mr. D'Alton——"

"Why call him 'D'Alton' when that isn't his name?" I asked, but was met with the grave response:

"It is better so. The time will soon come when his real name will be disclosed. Meanwhile, it is wisest not to encourage any possible slips of the tongue. As I was saying, I will tell Mr. D'Alton that you have been hypnotised into absolute docility, and that you are not merely willing, but anxious to enter the bonds of matrimony as soon as everything can be settled. You play your part properly until to-morrow, and you shall then be freed for ever from all association with this gang—that is, if I succeed in stealing your father's deeds and securities from the man who stole them from him."

"But what about my father—and Miss D'Alton—and Lord Broomville? And poor Alan Melrose? Are they all to be left at the mercy of murderers and thieves?"

I had unconsciously raised my voice at the last words, and Dr. Farnie hastily stepped to the door, unlocked it again, and flung it wide open.

"Miss D'Alton," he said sternly, "you are indiscreet, in spite of my warning! Have I not told you how much depends upon caution? Yet if that spy had been at the key-hole again, she could have heard what you said."

"Forgive me! My anxiety is to blame!" I whispered. "But I will make no more mistakes, believe me."

"Very well; I will trust you. And it may comfort you to know that all the people you have mentioned are being guarded. H'sh! Here comes somebody!"

The door was now nearly closed, but the doctor's sharp ears had detected the sound of a creeping footstep, and, giving me a warning glance, he addressed me in a voice which could be easily heard by a diligent eavesdropper.

"I am glad to hear that you have decided about that," he said. "Shall I tell your father that you like the idea of becoming a princess?"

"Yes—please do," was my obediently-spoken answer. "Tell him that I hope he will let me have a very grand wedding, too. What's the good of marrying a prince if you don't let plenty of people know about it?"

"And you really love the Prince?"

"Oh, yes! I ought to do that, anyway, after he has done me so much honour."

"Certainly. Of course, as Mr. D'Alton's daughter, you have a great position in that section of society that worships money. But there are many exclusive circles in which millions are of much less account than noble blood, and as the Princess Gorouki you will associate with royalty."

"Yes. Won't it be lovely? I wish everything could be arranged at once! I'm dying to make sure that there will be no hindrance."

"My darling child, the Prince is as anxious to expedite matters as you are, so you must go with your aunt to-morrow to buy a trousseau worthy of the occasion."

Both the doctor and I had been aware that the door had been gently pushed open, and that our conversation was being listened to. But we apparently took no notice, and we both feigned pleasurable surprise when my pretended father joined in with the above speech.

"You see," observed the now smiling doctor, "your daughter's indisposition was only temporary."

"And you are quite well again, dear?"

"I should think so," was my gay response. "If you had seen the lunch I ate, you wouldn't think that there was much the matter with me. But, I say, did you ever know such a lucky girl as I am? I can hardly believe it true that the Prince really proposed to me!"

Delight beamed all over the face of the man, who thought that at last all his schemes were turning out to his liking, and he almost overwhelmed me with suggested presents. I might have wondered where the money was to come from that was apparently to be spent so prodigally upon me, if I had not been secretly certain that if I allowed myself to fall into the trap laid for me, I should not be allowed to live to enjoy my promised splendour.

But, knowing all there was at stake, I played my part to perfection, being probably aided by Dr. Farnie, who never took his eyes off my face while the conversation lasted.

"It isn't too late to go out shopping now," I suggested. "Suppose Aunt Flora and I drive to Bond Street and Regent Street to-day?"

But, for some reason, a veto was put upon this plan, and I was enjoined to make myself as pretty as possible before Prince Gorouki arrived. He was, it appeared, ready to sign an already prepared heavy settlement upon me at once, and securities for my dowry of half a million were to be

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handed over to him as soon as the settlement deed had been made absolutely legal and binding.

It seemed rather a strange thing for the settlements to be immediately transferable to me, without waiting for the marriage ceremony to be actually performed. But the Prince was so infatuated that he was ready to agree to anything.

Besides, he had more than their equivalent in value ready to be handed over to him there and then, so he had nothing to lose, even if the wedding did not take place. At least he thought so. But I, for one, knew how fearfully he was mistaken, and when, during the course of the afternoon, he put in an appearance at Park Lane, my heart ached for the man who was showing all the gleefulness of a boy at what he deemed the consummation of his happiness.

I was ashamed, too, of my share in deceiving him. But I saw the absolute necessity of doing so, and I strove hard to avoid unnecessary gush, while at the same time I was careful to obey Dr. Farnie's hints and injunctions implicitly.

We had many callers during the afternoon, but none of them were admitted, though it would only have seemed natural to blazon the news of the engagement to all and sundry, and the Prince himself was in such a state of delight that he was anxious for everybody to know of his supposed good fortune.

I shall never forget that afternoon as long as I live, for I knew, only too well, why the ogres who claimed to be my relations were so determined to let Prince Gorouki speak to nobody outside their own circle until they had finished with him.

He was the head of his house, and could do as he liked both in the way of marriage, and in the disposal of his fortune. So "Mr. D'Alton" knew that the deed of settlement would be duly honoured.

But what about the half million worth of securities? *They were not mentioned in the settlement deed.* Therefore, if the Prince met with an *accident*, and was deprived of the securities, there was nothing to prove any liability towards him in the matter of my dowry!

To this end, therefore, if not to a fatal one, were the schemers arranging the whole business, and when the Prince made a move to go to his hotel, to dress for a dinner engagement of some days' standing, I gazed at him in helpless horror, for I knew not what to do—whether to ruin my father's prospects by disclosing everything, or whether to let Prince Gorouki go out to meet the fate which I was sure was mapped out for him.

"They will never let him reach his hotel alive with those securities on him! They will find some means of killing him and robbing him. Then my so-called father will claim the settlement-money in my name, and there will be nothing to show that there is anything due in return! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"My dear little girl, I do believe that you are sorry to part from me!" murmured the Prince, kissing my hand gallantly. "But I shall see you again to-night, for I will cut one or two of my engagements. And after our wedding—next week—I shall never let you out of my sight again!"

Poor man! He had mistaken my anxiety of mind for regret at parting from him for an hour or two! And I knew not how to undeceive him! I seemed as if I neither dared let him go, nor warn him against his enemies!

It was Dr. Farnie who came to my relief, with the meaningly-spoken words: "Miss D'Alton is so happy that she seems loth to lose you for awhile. Your Highness is honoured in being the object of her solicitude, but I should think she may trust you to come back to her *safe and sound.*"

Prince Gorouki looked haughtily at the speaker, as if he thought his intervention both impertinent and uncalled-for.

But I knew his words to be an assurance that a watch would be kept upon His Highness' safety, and that the murderous gang would be allowed to commit no more crimes. So I gave a sigh of relief, and banished all anxiety on my temporary *fiancé's* part.

"You have done splendidly," soon whispered Dr. Farnie, whose face, however, remained grave and mystical, as befitted the part he was playing. "You have done splendidly, and I have been assured that the honorarium will be paid if the wedding takes place."

"Do you think it will?" I asked anxiously, for I had an inward dread lest some form of coercion would be employed on me.

"Certainly not," was the reply. "Ah, Mr. D'Alton, what a proud man you must be to have a daughter lovely enough and good enough to make the grandest match of the season! She has just been asking me if there is any danger of the marriage being postponed or prevented, but I tell her that all her fears are groundless. Everything will be arranged to perfection? Is not that so?"

Mr. D'Alton had joined us, and Dr. Farnie had been clever enough to address him in a way which lulled him into greater security, while at the same time he had said enough to tranquillise me.

* * * * *

It was past midnight, and every nerve in my body throbbed with excitement, for success or failure hinged on what was being done now. Dr. Farnie had employed his eyes and his wits to some purpose while he had been here, and to-night was to see the culmination of all his efforts on behalf of his friends.

He had located the resting-place of the papers he wanted to secure, and had determined to obtain possession of them by using the gift which was to have been exercised balefully upon me. In other words, if caution and strategy were insufficient for his purpose, he meant to try hypnotism. Mr. D'Alton had forgotten that if the gift could be exercised at will on one person, it was likely to be no less potent when directed towards another, and he had never entertained the idea of being victimised himself.

Yet such was Dr. Farnie's intention, and Mrs. Sherwood had unconsciously swallowed a few drops of an opiate which would effectually keep her out of the way for a few hours.

It had been arranged between the doctor and myself that I should keep in readiness for the signal which would tell me whether my co-operation was needed or not.

It came at last in the form of a faint tap at my boudoir door, and I instantly obeyed it.

I was fully dressed, but I wore noiseless bedroom slippers, and had carefully avoided keeping on any article of attire that gave the slightest rustle, for I was as yet quite in the dark as to what I might have to do in the present crisis, except that I must be cautious not to make a sound that would betray my presence.

I carried in my hand a small bag which contained sundry letters and keepsakes which I had brought from Bochum with me, or had received from the few real friends I had made since I came to London.

All the costly jewellery with which my hateful office of decoy had been made attractive had now been left severely alone, for now that so many of my suspicions were at last shaping themselves into frightful realities, I would have nothing which had been given to me by the murderous gang from whose power I hoped to escape this very night.

Going swiftly downstairs I hid the bag where I could easily pick it up on my way out of the house. Then I looked around me, and saw just what I expected—a light shining under the door of the study, which was sacred to the use of the master of the house.

I entered the room without ceremony, and noiselessly ensconced myself behind a tall draught-screen near the window, which already hid a black brief-bag, placed there in readiness by the doctor.

Then I waited for developments.

But how the time seemed to drag! I dared not move for fear of making a noise just when somebody might be near enough to hear me, and my limbs were stiff and cramped when at last I heard the sound for which I was waiting.

Footsteps echoed softly on the thick stair-carpet, and I could

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tell that two persons were descending. At the foot of the stairs they stepped on to the tesselated hall, and it was easy to judge that they were approaching the study.

A moment later the door was thrown wide open.

Then Dr. Farnie and "Mr. D'Alton" came within my range of vision, and, as they walked towards the fireplace, I could see that the former was keeping his eyes firmly fixed upon the face of the latter, whose movements were precisely like those of a helpless automaton.

I knew exactly what had happened. The hypnotist had exerted his gift to some purpose, and had subjugated "Mr. D'Alton" to such an extent that he would probably do whatever he was told to do.

"Sit down at this table," commanded the operator, and the "subject" slowly obeyed him.

"Empty your pockets, and describe the uses of the various keys you carry."

Without even the shadow of resistance, the subject began to place a number of articles upon the table, and I could easily see what they were. For his back was turned towards me, and in accordance with previous instructions, I had cautiously crept near enough to be able to note what had transpired.

Dr. Farnie had been doubtful of his power to keep "Mr. D'Alton" long enough in subjection if it became necessary to relax his commanding gaze even for a second, hence the necessity for my presence.

The bunch of keys lay on the table, and "Mr. D'Alton" fingered them one by one as he, in obedience to the doctor's mandate, began to speak slowly.

"This is the key of the bureau in this room, and this smaller one unlocks the sliding well in which I keep all the D'Alton papers. This next key opens the top right hand drawer. In that drawer are the records and proceeds of the New Barbary Land Development Company. This last key opens the safe which is built into the recess, and in which I stored the Graysworthy and O'Connor plunder. Prince Gorouki will help to fill that safe again soon."

My blood ran cold at these words, for they were conclusive proof that this wicked man had really committed the crimes of which I had suspected him. I wondered if he would make any more terrible disclosures. But Dr. Farnie was apparently afraid of exercising his power too long, and he interposed, in a hard, firm, staccato voice: "You will leave those keys on the table and return to your own room."

To my intense relief these orders were complied with. The hypnotised man, caught in his own trap, let the keys drop from his fingers, rose to his feet obediently, and, drawn by the doctor's magnetic gaze, walked quietly out of the room.

Now was the chance that the doctor had planned for me!

I was alone, within reach of the papers which were to restore to my unfortunate father the competence of which he had been robbed! In two seconds I had seized the bunch of keys, and had opened the sliding well in which the D'Alton papers were kept. Having secured all these, I hurriedly packed them in the brief bag, and, working like lightning, but without making any noise, I also possessed myself of the papers dealing with the New Barbary Development Land Co.

But I could not touch the safe which held that for which men had been murdered, and, putting the keys into the bag which already contained the papers, I left further investigation for other hands to perform.

The bag was now quite heavy. But I carried it into the great marble hall, and put it down beside the door while I reached my own modest property. Happily the switching on and off of the electric light was only the matter of a finger pressure and involved no noise. Neither did the opening of the door, for Dr. Farnie had already seen to that.

So, taking one last look at the Fairy fountain whose beauty had been bought by greed and crime, I gently turned the great door handle, lifted both bags, and, with my heart palpitating with dread of what might still be before me, I stepped out into the black, cheerless night.

(To be concluded.)

Our Great Easter Number.

All of you will be interested to hear that our next issue will be our Splendid Easter Holiday Number. It will, in addition to the usual features, contain the opening chapter of "Phantom Shadows," the admirable new serial story from the pen of Arnold Bennett, who is, as most of you are probably aware, one of the foremost novelists of the day. "Phantom Shadows" is a grand story. Every word of it is well worth reading, for the plot is most original, incident follows incident in rapid succession, and the characters are, as they always should be in good literature, absolutely true to Nature. "Excellent!" will be the verdict of every single reader of "Phantom Shadows," I am sure. A great charm will be lent to the story by the illustrations of Reginald Cleaver. On page 399 will be found a reduced facsimile of the picture which will be printed in colours on the cover of next week's *Short Stories*.

Do Unto Others.

If you have any friends to whom you think of introducing this paper, which has become so universally popular, you could not choose a better time than the present. Here we have a unique competition, the novelty of which no one can fail to appreciate, just begun, and a fine serial story starts next week. The final instalment of "Decoyed" will appear in the same issue, and will shortly be replaced by a series which everyone will read with delight. Just glance around your acquaintances, and note those who are not regular subscribers to *S. S.* Introduce the paper to them, and act the Good Samaritan, for you will please, first, those to whose attention you draw *S. S.*; secondly, yourself, by seeing their satisfaction and receiving their thanks; and, thirdly, myself and my staff, who are striving so hard to earn the hearty congratulations of the thousands of persons who can discriminate between that which is good and clever literature and that which is the reverse.

A Successful Competitor.

I consider that the most just solution to the Ninth Unsolved Love Problem, entitled "The Ordeal of David Hume," was sent in by Mrs. Tom Horne, 11 Greville Road, Kilburn, London, N.W., and I therefore award that lady the prize of one guinea I offered.

If you have not already done so, there is just time for you to make an attempt to win the guinea I offered for a solution to the problem entitled "The Heart of Claire Gilchrist," which appeared last week. All you have to do is to write down in a few words your advice to the girl under the circumstances related. All replies must reach this office not later than Friday, March 25th.

Your Editor.

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THE REASON.

Showing how Easy it is to Misjudge.

A SOLITARY horseman pauses at the brow of a hill.

"Is it the big house on the summit, or the little house lower down towards the left?"

This is the question puzzling him as he takes a bird's-eye view of the country-side.

The question is decided for him, for at that moment he becomes aware of the approach of another human soul on the solitary hillside. A girl, on horseback also, riding through the gorse and broom towards him; within two yards of one another their eyes meet and exchange curious glances. Captain Bayley raises his hat.

"Can you direct me to 'Penruddocke'?" he asks her, and his question solves the mystery of his presence to her.

"You are——"

"Captain Bayley."

She rides close up to him, extending a frank and friendly hand of greeting.

"I am Miss Lascelles," she informs him.

He takes her proffered hand, looking at her with an air of injured concern.

"Then my business is with you. Somehow I had pictured Miss Lascelles quite a middle-aged lady."

The shadow of a smile flits past the girl's soft eyes, leaving them all the softer for its fleeting presence.

"It is of no consequence," she says, waiving the subject at her own proud pleasure. "I had expected you; your sister wrote and told me that you would come to me as soon as possible—and I saw that the *Serapis* had come into dock last month."

"The end of last month. It is now only the fourteenth," he interposes hastily.

"Exactly," she says, looking past him across the broom while the sunshine slants between them.

"My sister said go to 'Penruddocke,' ask for Miss Lascelles, and into her own hands deliver this."

The girl makes a hasty gesture with her hand as though she would stay his movements. He does not observe it, and from the breast-pocket of his coat, which he had unbuttoned, he brings forth a packet which he holds towards her.

"Here it is! I am a faithful steward."

A change has crept over her face during these last few seconds—an expression of pain and fear had replaced its habitual one of imperious power. She extends her hand, it is trembling. "Thank you," she whispers brokenly, under her breath. He has averted his eyes from her; he cannot bear to witness her distress—shame—which is it?

"I have fulfilled my trust, for the sake of which forgive my previous blunders. I am glad to have met you, even so, good-bye," he says.

She is gazing at the packet he had given her with an absorbing interest. Captain Bayley lingers, loth to leave her alone. Just then he repeats "good-bye." She looks up at last.

"No—not yet—so soon—I have not thanked you; I—I—you have been very good in taking so much trouble for a stranger."

"Not quite a stranger, for you are a friend of my sister's, a 'dear friend,' she told me," smiling kindly at her.

Miss Lascelles' face lights up with a positive glow of tenderness.

"She called me a 'dear friend.' Ah! thank Heaven for that."

"And now, Miss Lascelles, since you will not say 'good-bye' just yet, permit me to see you safely home."

She does not answer in the affirmative, but turns her horse's head in the direction of "Penruddocke." "It was the little house after all," is the captain's reflection.

"Come in, I will give you some tea, and introduce you to Jack," she says, and the face she turns towards him is restored to its usual proud serenity.

The temptation thus set forth is too strong for him to resist; he accepts it.

"Jack" is her brother—a giant stripling, with eyes as blue as a girl's and the shadow of down on his upper lip, which Nature had curled imperiously like his sister's. He is very hearty in his welcome of Captain Bayley. He remembered the captain's sister, Mrs. Bob Beattie; what a jolly woman she was! Fox-hunting season nearly at its finish, lambs are early this year, and so on, and so on. By tacit consent the real object of Bayley's visit is not broached.

"You are staying in the neighbourhood, are you? Then you'll look us up again?" young Lascelles cries heartily when they are parting.

Miss Lascelles walks with them to the open door.

"Yes, come," she says. And then "good-bye."

Captain Bayley trots briskly down the hill.

"And that is Mina's friend, Marion Lascelles; she lives alone at 'Penruddocke' with that boy. Sweet soul! Poor soul!"

* * * * *

"But I liked you better,
Marion—Marion—I liked you better, Marion,
Riding through the broom."

Captain Bayley hums the words of the song lightly under his breath. Miss Lascelles looks up into his face with an indefinable expression—a flash—and it is gone.

"Why should you have liked her better then?"

"Because it was our first meeting, and I had her all to myself—just she and I alone among the broom."

"Ah! that was it," carelessly toying with a flower in the posy she is holding in her hand. "And, Marion, do you think she liked you better then, or now in twentieth century evening dress?"

"Shall I ask her?" with the ghost of a smile in his eyes.

"Perhaps you had better not. She, too, may have preferred you on first acquaintance; your vanity might possibly be hurt by such an admission on her part."

"It would not, pretty Marion. Come, there is the next waltz striking up, and it is ours."

They pass through the conservatory on their way to the ball-room in single file; and the women admire the set of

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Miss Lascelles' flowing skirts, the men her white shoulders, and Captain Bayley the top of her head, on which he is looking down, five auburn curls placed zigzag, and a fluffy fringe. They had seen a good deal of one another during the past ten days. First, there was that meeting on the hill, then a formal call which ended in a sociable meal, then a day spent pottering with the foxhounds, another call, and to-night the ball.

"Look at Bayley! That's his third dance running with Marion Lascelles—seems a case, eh?" drawls Carnegy to Mrs. Wylie, who is their mutual hostess.

"I hope not," testily; "Marion Lascelles is a flirt."

"And Bayley as jealous as the grave——"

"It would never do."

If they could have followed the "unsuitable couple" into the conservatory during the supper hour, and seen and heard what took place there! Miss Lascelles can never remember how it came about, only her astonishment that this man, above all others, should express sentiments of love to her.

"*You* love *me?*" she exclaims, and then changing the emphasis to "you *love* me?"

"Yes; why not?" a sudden gloom possessing him as he begins to realise that this may not prove a happy wooing for him.

"Why? Oh, you know very little of me——"

"It is not knowledge, it is instinct which prompts love," Laurence Bayley declares with an impatience that will brook no delay. He will have his answer. "I love you—do you care for me?"

Marion touches him with an imperative gesture.

"If you *know*, you have been unwise in your choice of time: if you do *not* know, there can be nothing between us."

"You are speaking in riddles," he returns coldly. "I know you sufficiently well to believe that you are necessary to my happiness. I do not love lightly, and for me there can be no cure, that is, if you refuse me. But you will not?" breaking off into sharp intreaty.

Her brows are knit in pain, she does not answer him.

"You will—you do. I was a fool to imagine that you might care for me, and yet you have encouraged me, drawn me on in a thousand different ways. Well, it was a dream, and short-lived," and he turns from her.

"Laurence, do not go. I love you, I love you." She has flung her scruples, her prudence, to the winds just in this one moment of passion, and is clinging to him. "You were quite right; I drew you on; I wanted you to care for me; I did not stop to consider. Can you ever forgive me?"

"For loving me?" with the brightest smile he had ever given her.

"No, no, no," wrenching herself from his arms, "I have been mad—wicked—dreaming; we must not—you must not do that. Turn your face away; do not look at me. I am not what I appear to be. *You can never marry me!*"

"Marion!"

"It is true. I swear it. You are a good man, a stern man. I have gauged your character—I know its strength and its weakness. You could not overlook my fault. We must part."

Captain Bayley is stunned. He stands staring helplessly at her.

"We must part," she repeats, and looks for him to say "No."

But he does not.

She leaves him standing there to search for her brother, and induce him to forsake the festivities with her.

There is something glittering on the tesselated floor at Captain Bayley's feet. He stoops to pick it up—it is a fine, gold chain, slipped through a wedding-ring.

He can understand now why she cannot marry him, and the knowledge makes his heart bitter.

* * * * *

Jack watches his sister suspiciously as she opens a note which has been awaiting her. It is addressed in Captain Bayley's hand-writing; there is a regimental crest on the envelope. Marion had come in from her morning ride, pale and listless still, but her face brightened, and her step regained some of its old elasticity as she perceived the note lying on the table. Jack turns his back for a moment, and takes one, two, three puffs at his cigarette; then something which is not merely vulgar curiosity moves him to look towards her again. She has fallen forward in her chair with her face resting upon the table.

"Marion, what is it?" springing to her side. She lifts her face, white as ashes, towards him.

"*It is this!*" she says, and holds up a fine gold chain which is passed through a wedding-ring.

* * * * *

His Majesty's troopship *Euphrates* is lying in Portsmouth harbour. On the morrow she will slip her moorings and set sail for Bombay.

Captain Bayley is staying at the "Queen's Hotel," Southsea; he is thinking of the morrow—with little regret, though, for all places are alike to him. He has dined, and is now smoking a course of cigarettes on the balcony, looking out over the sea which is washing the shores with a gentle splash, monotonous in its sound.

Somebody below is feebly drumming on the piano, singing songs at intervals. Captain Bayley is a patient listener to "Home, Sweet Home," with variations, "Good Old Jeff" song, more "Home, Sweet Home," and variations, "The Wearing of the Green" song, "Rule Britannia," played, that is thumped, with spirit, and then—"Confound it!"

This ejaculation is wrung from him, for that musical soul below had struck up "Marion."

"*I liked you better—*
I—liked—you—better—Marion,
Riding through the broom."

"Confound it!" and, swinging round, he finds a civil waiter at his elbow.

"A gentleman, sir, to see you. He is following me up, sir."

Captain Bayley stalks into his private sitting-room on the balcony, and finds there awaiting him—Jack Lascelles.

It is his first impulse to rush forward with outstretched hand of welcome, but a stern expression on the boyish face of his visitor deters him. He says instead: "Good evening," coldly, too.

"I have no doubt you are surprised to see me," commences the lad; and with his lip curled so, he reminds Laurence forcibly of his sister; "I saw your name down as sailing in the vessel which goes out to-morrow, and I felt that this was my last and only opportunity of seeing you. I went to your club, and they told me that I should find you here to-night, so I came."

"Yes," inquiringly, shutting his ears to that tune, "Marion," which is haunting him. "Can I do anything for you? What is it?"

The boyish blue eyes darken. "You can do nothing for me. I have taken considerable trouble for the purpose of enlightening you regarding a portion of my sister's history. It is right that you should know it. I tell you, striking his clenched fist against the palm of his hand excitedly, it is right and fair and just to her. God knows what you think, how you have misjudged her—you shall do so no longer. I am determined that you shall hear the truth to-night, when it is too late for you to make your peace with her, even if you felt so disposed."

The elder man bows his head; he is prepared to listen.

"Marion married when she was at school at the age of sixteen," he commences abruptly. "Hers was a runaway match, contracted without the knowledge or sanction of our father, who was then alive. The man was a worthless villain, and deserted the girl who had risked so much for his sake a few days after their marriage. Marion returned to her father's protection on one stipulation—that she should assist him in concealing her story from the rest of the world. There seemed no necessity to blazon it abroad, and so she was known still as Miss Lascelles. About a year ago chance led to the discovery of the whereabouts of Marion's husband. He was at Bangalow, and we learnt that there he subse-

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quently met with an accident at polo, which ended fatally. Letters Marion had written him fell into your sister's possession, and so she knew the truth. This was the packet she intrusted you with. If you doubt the authenticity of my story, she can corroborate it. Now I have finished; I will neither excuse nor explain further."

"Stay! stay!" calls Bayley imperiously. Jack turns at the door. "It is too late," he reminds him, "too late for you to attempt to win Marion's forgiveness, or I should not have come to you with the history of her wrongs."

"God help me, that is true," groans Laurence. "And yet I thank you for coming. I acted according to my lights, but *I loved your sister*. Believe this. God bless you!"

And with that blessing ringing in his ears, Jack goes.

On the morrow, H.M.S. *Euphrates* sails. Jack goes home to his sister, but says not a word of the steps he had taken to vindicate her lost reputation in the eyes of the man who should have believed in her more completely — trusted her more fully. For the next few weeks he watches her carefully, noting the returning elasticity to her step, the colour to her cheeks, with brotherly tenderness. She will get over this new sorrow. Poor Marion, she was very young when she first learnt to suffer!

"There are not many brothers in the world like *you*, Jack," she remarks inadvertently one day.

Lascelles breaks off in the midst of a tune he is whistling to return her compliment.

Gradually Miss Lascelles drops out from the old circles in which she had been courted and admired; the pair live more quietly than ever, seemingly content in each other's society. Then a day falls when "Penruddocke" is given up, and the Lascelles quit the country-side.

* * * *

It is Chance which fashions and changes our lives; Chance—Heaven-sent, or otherwise. Captain Bayley is inclined to vote for the former, when a turning in Piccadilly brings him face to face with Jack Lascelles one sultry afternoon in July. The younger man would have passed on with the barest possible recognition, but Bayley stands still in the road before him, and holds out his hand. "You would not pass me, Lascelles, if you did but know how anxiously I have looked for such a meeting. It is three years since we met—an eternity of time! And how has the world been faring with you? They told me you had sold 'Penruddocke'—I have just been staying in those parts."

Lascelles' generous heart relents within him: he cannot resist this hollow-eyed, haggard man, who just resembles the haughty, handsome Bayley of three years back—besides, at times, he is inclined towards the belief that Marion's is a wasted life. She loved Bayley better than he deserved—it is the way with women.

"I am sorry to see you looking so seedy, Bayley—sick leave, I suppose."

"Yes; I was wounded in a skirmish about a year ago and have had a baddish time ever since; however, this climate will soon set me up again. Your sister, Lascelles, how is she? Where is she?"

Jack says quietly: "Come and see."

Marion Lascelles—for by that name she is still known—is alone in the drawing-room of their little house in Mayfair—when Captain Bayley walks in. "Marion," he says, "I have come back—can you ever forgive my cruelty to you in the past?"

What, think you, was her answer?

Jessie Chalmers.

THIS WILL INTEREST YOU.

This is a reduced facsimile of our next week's cover. The picture shows Mr. Theodore Racksole, the American millionaire, and his daughter Nella, in the dining-room at a great London hotel. He orders Jules the waiter (who is involved in a villainous scheme to kidnap a reigning prince) to bring him a steak and a bottle of Bass. Jules refuses to carry out this strange request, and it costs Racksole £400,000 to have his own way. The endless complications that ensue are related with thrilling intensity in "Phantom Shadows," the splendid new serial that starts in next week's SHORT STORIES.

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BY STRENGTH OF WILL.

Relating the Story of a Flirtation and its Results.

There is a pool a little more than a mile from the town of Windham, in one of the loveliest bits of landscape in the country. From its great depth and stagnation, its waters are intensely black, and the clouds by day and the stars by night are reflected in it as in an ebony mirror.

It has an ill-repute in the neighbourhood, and is little frequented, in spite of the beauty in which it is set. The wild flowers on its banks die unplucked, and the frogs that live on its borders croak through the long evenings in undisturbed contentment. On one side a rock, some twenty feet in height and crowned with a clump of short trees, rises perpendicularly out of the water.

Upon this rock, one evening late in August, sat a man and woman, who had evidently chosen the spot for its absolute seclusion.

The man was a fine-looking fellow of thirty, tall and strongly built, with a light beard, curling yellow hair, and large, full-lidded, hazel eyes.

His own opinion of himself was pretty evident in his careless expression of self-satisfaction and confident air. Not bad at heart, an observer of men might have said, but utterly weak and spoilt.

His companion sat watching him intently with an expression of mingled anxiety and impatience. She could have been no more than eighteen, but there was a firmness and energy in her face which gave her an older air than belonged to her years.

She was not beautiful after any type; her features were too pale and irregular. But her bright brown eyes, shadowed by heavy, arching eyebrows, her sensitive mouth, and evident refinement and intelligence, would have been extremely attractive to a man less in love with himself than the person beside her.

Her chief charm, however, was in her figure, slim and luxuriant, full of soft curves, and graceful in a certain leopard-like way which had something very characteristic in it.

She was the first to speak.

"You are going away to-morrow, then," she said, with an undertone of agitation in her voice.

"Yes," responded the other. "Thanks to you, I have spent a charming holiday. Do you know, I shall quite regret it."

"Indeed!" said the girl, with an accent of sarcasm. "Not the least pleasure of your retrospect will doubtless be that you have succeeded in making unhappy an unsophisticated country girl."

"Now, my dear Helen," exclaimed her companion, "why will you take that tone with me? I explained my position fully. I told you that I was going back in the autumn to be married. That should satisfy you. A fellow can't break a promise, you know."

"But he can break every unwritten law of honour," returned the girl fiercely. "He can live a lie; he can delude and desert the innocent for a little amusement. He can prove himself to be utterly heartless and utterly selfish. All this it seems he can do, without lowering himself in his own opinion.

"You say you explained. When did you explain? Not until our intercourse had lasted for three months; not until you had won my love and asked me to be your wife—when you had made an utter fool of me, involved my reputation, and connected our names together throughout the village. Then you explain that you never intended to make me your wife—that it was all a flirtation, and that you were engaged to another woman, whom you intended to marry."

"You are becoming tragic, Helen," said the young man, uneasily. "Why can't you be sensible and make the best of it?"

"You really believe that I shall submit without a murmur?" she asked, in a low, harsh tone. "You are sure that this is the last of it?"

"I can't really see what can be done about it," said the other, with a yawn. "If you were so foolish as to take my talk seriously, and form any expectations upon it, why, you are to blame—not I. You had better be philosophical, shake hands, forget and forgive all, and find some other fellow who will appreciate your incontestable attractions better than I do."

"Now listen to me," cried the girl, springing to her feet. "I tell you, Jarvis Darnley, this is *not* the end of it. The love of a woman like me does not die; it becomes hate—hate as intense as the love you do not deserve. A will like mine does not submit to insult and wrong; it revenges itself. This is to be no folly of a summer to be laughed over and forgotten. There will be a sequel."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Darnley, rising in turn and looking at her in some alarm. "I hope you are not going to be rash."

"I am going to make you repent every hour of this summer!" answered the girl wildly. "You shall bitterly regret every lie you have told me, every treacherous kiss, every false look. Henceforth it shall be the business of my life to do justice between us. Remember my words in the time to come, when your wife caresses you, when your children gather at your knee."

Her voice, which had been pitched in a sharp, high key, suddenly sank into a low, trembling sob.

At this sign of womanly weakness all of Darnley's confidence returned. He broke into a loud laugh.

"Well done!" he cried. "Some day Helen Fielding will be known to the world as a superb tragic actress. Come, now, pay me for my flattering prophecy. Kiss me and forget this rubbish."

He stepped towards her as he spoke with his arms extended; but she shrank back with a visible shudder.

"Do not touch me!" she exclaimed. "Your words are an insult."

But he continued to advance, and she to recede, motioning him off with a gesture of disgust.

In the gathering darkness neither of them saw how near they had approached the edge of the rock. A frail hedge of briars screened the sheer brink of the precipice, and already Helen stood pressed close against it.

Another backward step and her foot slipped. She struggled desperately and silently for a second to recover her balance; then, with a shrill cry, dashed through the bushes, tearing her garments and savagely wounding her face and hands, and plunged into the pool with a heavy, horrible splash.

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For an instant Darnley stood dumb and terror-stricken. A few shreds of the unfortunate girl's clothing floated from the bushes; the thorns were stained with her blood, invisible in the darkness. Below he could hear a faint sobbing, a frenzied splashing, then all was silent.

Darnley was not bad at heart. A sense of awful pity for the poor girl seized upon him. He looked wildly round for the means of rescuing her.

He was a good swimmer, but to have plunged after the drowning girl off the cliff would have been to risk striking some concealed rock, even if the fall from such a height did not stun him.

He ran rapidly down the rock towards a point where the shore of the pool shelved into the water. When he reached the spot the surface of the pool was blank; the girl's figure had disappeared.

An uneasy ripple upon the water, a gentle waving of the reeds growing in the shallows, alone told of the terrible tragedy which had just occurred. Utterly unnerved, Darnley sat down and buried his face in his hands.

Although the poor girl's death had been an accident, he felt like a murderer. She had died with reproaches upon her lips, and he began to wonder if, after all, he had not been responsible for her destruction.

For the first time in his life the little manly feeling of which he was possessed rose and smote him with a sense of shame and remorse.

What had seemed before only the amusement of an idle hour now assumed the proportions of a crime. The drama of folly had ended in death.

Hot tears of sorrow and terror trickled through his fingers; like the weakling that he was, he wept over the consequences of his own selfish heartlessness, more in pity for his own misery than for the wrong he had done.

Presently he rose, and, after searching accessible parts of the shore, shuddering at every floating leaf, fearing to see in it an upturned, accusing face, he turned his steps towards the town.

He reported the circumstances of the disaster to the police, reserving only the events which led up to it.

As he was commonly supposed to be the girl's lover, no suspicion rested upon him.

The pool was dredged, but nothing was found. The dim, watery caverns had swallowed their prey and would not disgorge it.

After the necessary legal forms had been complied with, Darnley left the town in mad haste.

Whether in her wild threats the girl had had a prevision of her sudden death, he could not know, but it was none the less certain that the memory of her haunted him like an accusing spectre for many long months. Already, as she had foretold, he bitterly regretted the folly of that summer, and would have willingly given ten years of his frivolous life if it had never occurred.

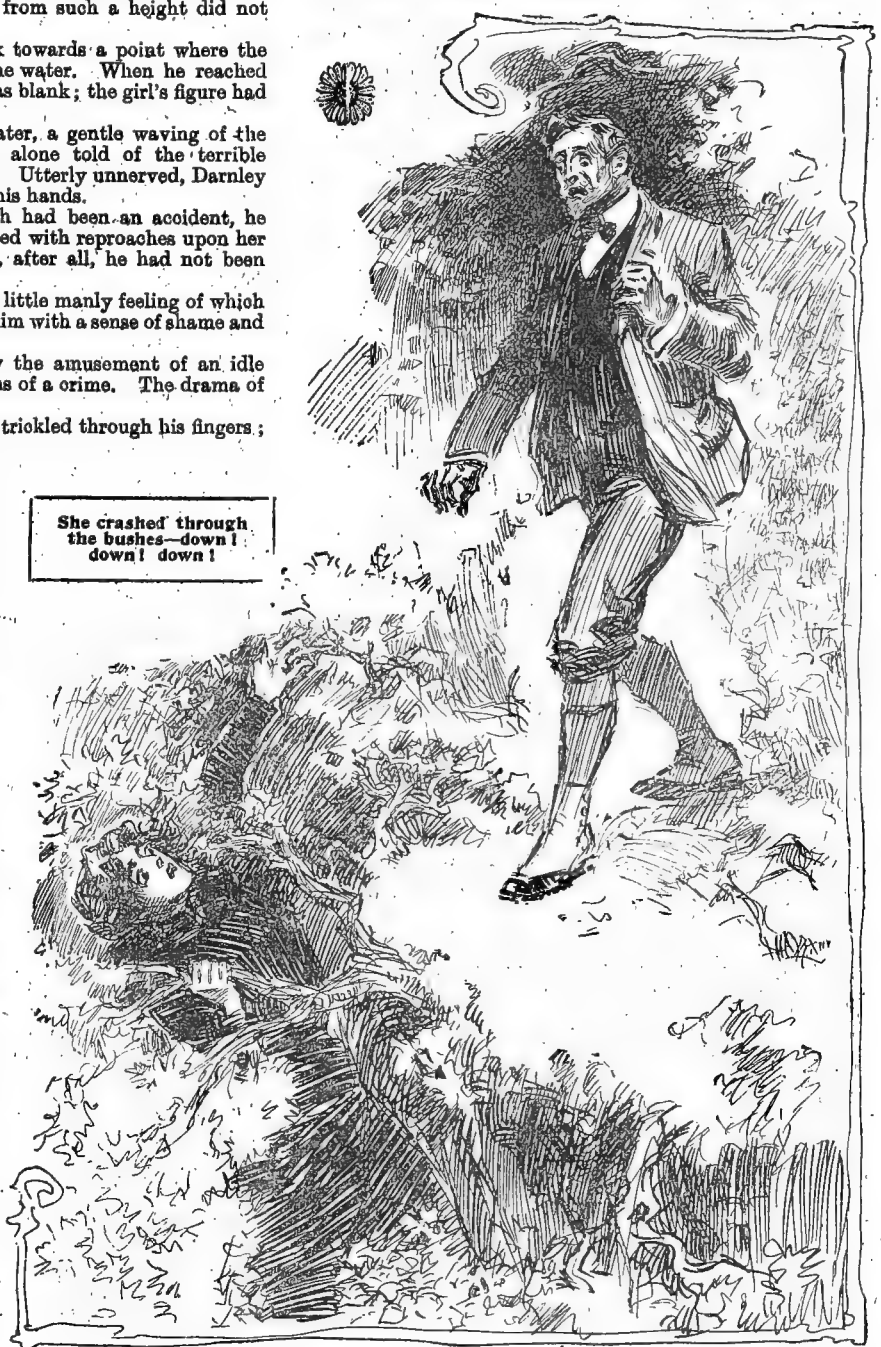
On such men as Darnley even the most painful experiences can make no lasting impression.

In the course of time the events at Windham faded away into an unpleasant shadow.

If there were moments when Helen Fielding, her unfortunate love and miserable death, returned to his mind, he had not much difficulty in banishing them again.

He married a meek little light-haired woman, the exact contrast of Helen, who admired and feared him to his heart's content.

He had never told her the particulars of his connection with Helen Fielding's death, and she had never annoyed



She crashed through the bushes—down! down! down!

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him by referring to that unfortunate event when she found how distasteful it was to him.

To all appearances, then, Helen Fielding's menaces had proved as vain as her love, and Darnley was not likely to pay for his folly and cruelty as heavily as they deserved.

* * * * *

Six years after their marriage, Mrs. Darnley's health, never of the best, became entirely broken. She was confined to her room, a hopeless invalid. She had meantime presented her husband with two children—little girls—upon whom the whole power of his weak nature became concentrated. They constituted his sole pleasure and care, and his love for them was such that he often declared that if any evil should happen to either of them, it would kill him.

Their mother's illness prevented her from taking charge of them, and a friend of Mrs. Darnley's recommended to her a young woman, whose education and refinement made her at once a suitable governess for the children and a companion for the invalid.

Her name was Ellen Meadows, and she had suffered from some accident in her early youth which had terribly marred her features.

When Jarvis Darnley first beheld the new governess, he was conscious of a strange repugnance towards the unfortunate woman. She was still young, but there were traces of grey in her dark hair.

Her face was wretchedly scarred, so dreadfully indeed that its whole appearance must have been changed. Her deep brown eyes alone retained their beauty, and when Darnley met their quiet glance fixed upon him he had a dim and annoying sense of recognition. Yet from the woman's history it was plain that he could never have met her before.

His unaccountable dislike for Miss Meadows was so intense that he suggested her dismissal to his wife. But the invalid woman had taken a strong liking for her new companion, and insisted upon retaining her. Moreover, she had completely gained the affection of the two children; so, in spite of himself, Darnley was compelled to submit to her presence.

She proved herself to be a quiet, efficient person, rarely appearing in the lower parts of the house, and more rarely speaking in Darnley's presence.

But more than once he detected her eyes fixed upon him with a strange look, that, though he could not divine its meaning, sent a cold thrill to his heart.

In spite of his dislike, however, she soon gained a certain influence over him, as she had already done over the rest of the household. It was like a fascination. He found himself inquiring after her on his arrival home. He listened eagerly to the tone of her low voice when she spoke. She had but to suggest a wish, and he eagerly fulfilled it.

Yet it was nothing like affection that he felt for her; his old distrust and dislike clung to him through all. He sometimes wondered if she had not bewitched him. And the worst of it was that when she was near, no matter what might be going on, that terrible night on the cliff, Helen Fielding's menaces and her dreadful death, came back so vividly as to terrify him. He could not account for this, and very soon ceased to try.

As if the angel of misfortune had entered his home along with the governess, a series of disasters began to afflict the household. Mrs. Darnley's illness took an alarming turn, and the physicians declared that nothing more could be done for her.

Miss Meadows nursed her through all as if the invalid had been her sister. Often Darnley would see her through the open door of the sick-room leaning over the invalid until far in the night.

To Darnley the governess' attitude at such times seemed sinister—as if she were rather watching for the approach of death than endeavouring to ward it off.

But what could he do? At best his suspicions were those of a man half-crazed; and, besides, he was powerless to have banished the woman—as powerless as a bird is supposed to be under the eyes of a snake.

Finally, the long-expected death of Mrs. Darnley occurred. On the day after her burial there was a gentle rap upon the door of the room in which the stricken widower had secluded himself, and Miss Meadows entered, leading his two children by the hand. The governess began the interview by saying:

"I have come to know what change, if any, you propose to make in your household. Is it your wish that I remain in charge of your children, or go?"

The two children clung to her with a cry of dismay. The elder, turning her eyes boldly upon her father, said:

"She shall not go, papa. If she goes, I will go with her."

Darnley looked at his child with a startled glance.

"Do you love Miss Meadows more than you do me?" he said, with a painful effort at pleasantry.

The child seemed puzzled; a strange, wondering expression came into her face.

"I don't know," she replied slowly. "I don't think I love her. I can't tell what it is. Only she must stay. She shall be my new mamma."

Her father rose and began pacing the room with agitated steps. Now, if ever, was the time to assert himself—to free his life from the strange bondage this woman had thrown upon him. He resolved that, cost what it might, she should go. He turned towards her and opened his lips to give her a polite but firm dismissal, and encountered her gaze fastened upon him. Something in the bright, steadfast depths of her eyes seemed to paralyse his will. He stammered, hesitated, and was silent. Then, drawing a long breath, like a man in a dream, he muttered:

"Stay and be a mother to my children.!"

The governess bowed silently and left the room with the children, while Darnley sank down in his chair in a paroxysm of absolute terror. What was the secret of this woman's control over him? He disliked her—feared her, too, for that matter—and yet he was utterly powerless in her presence.

It seemed that the mysterious influence of evil which had fallen upon his house was not yet satisfied. His younger child fell dangerously ill. Again the governess was the indefatigable nurse. Again the wretched father saw her brooding over his child's crib through the silent hours of the night, and again the superstitious terror seized upon him.

In his extremity he made the family physician his confidant. He revealed all his distrust and alarm, and was told in as many words that it was his own mind that was wrong, disordered by his grief and anxiety. The child was suffering from a very common complaint, and the governess was doing all that lay in her power for its welfare.

Nevertheless, Darnley's mysterious forebodings proved only too true. The child died, as its mother had died, in the arms of Miss Meadows.

The governess brought the news to him, standing impassibly near the door, while she spoke in a slow, measured tone. Darnley started up with a cry.

"Oh, what have I done to deserve this?" he said.

"There are those who tell us that each sorrow is the punishment of a crime," said the governess coldly. "Are there no passages in your life to which this suffering is a sequel? Have you worked no misery to others equal to that which you feel now?"

Darnley turned about and glared at her. Something in her words or her voice had seemed like a recognition.

"Who are you, in Heaven's name?" he cried.

"Ellen Meadows, your governess," she answered calmly.

Darnley sat down and covered his eyes with his hand; when he looked up again, he was alone.

He had not yet finished with misfortune. His elder daughter, his favourite, had contracted the disease of which her sister had perished, and rapidly grew dangerously ill.

Once more the governess hung over her like a mother, living at her bedside, nursing her with such skill and care as won the hearty commendation of the physician.

Darnley, in the midst of his grief, was tortured with his former terrors. He walked the house like a maniac, neither sleeping nor eating. He stealthily watched every movement of the governess, but could discover nothing tangibly

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wrong in her actions. He saw that she was indeed what she seemed, a tireless and affectionate nurse.

Nevertheless, there was something terrible in the persistence with which she clung to the bedside. Her black-robed figure, crouching over the child, her eyes fixed with an intense, immovable gaze upon the sleeper's face, reminded him of the old stories of vampires which he had read in his youth. Yet, when he reasoned with himself calmly and collectedly, he could see how wild and irrational his doubts of the governess were.

The end which he had foreseen came at last. One night as he was watching the sickroom, through the half-open door, the governess made a sudden movement, then rose and held the candle over the child.

By its light Darnley could see the woman's face, and its expression terrified him.

A strange, almost agonised smile passed over her lips; a look of mingled sorrow and triumph shone in her eyes. She murmured a few undistinguishable words and set the candle upon the table again. Darnley burst into the room with a frenzied gesture.

"She is dead!" he cried.

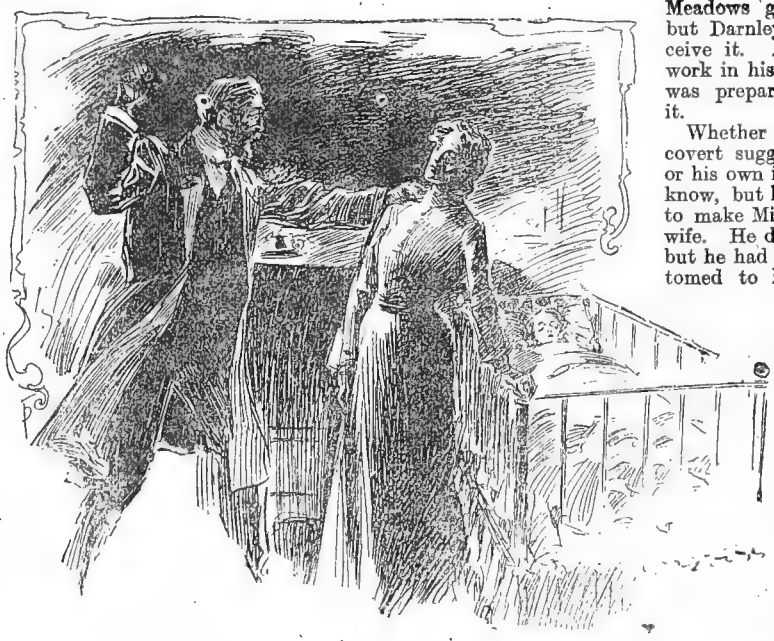
The woman turned quietly and looked at him.

"Yes," she said. "I expected it."

"You hoped it!" shouted Darnley. "Murderess, I saw your face before I entered the room. You have killed my child."

She made no reply, as if she disdained his accusations as the ravings of a maniac.

"Do you hear me, woman?" he cried. "You have murdered her as you did her sister and her mother. How, I do not know. But ever since you have entered this house evil has fallen upon me. Tell me what you have done; confess, or, by Heaven, I will do justice on you with my own hands!"



"Murderess! You have killed my child!"

He had seized her fiercely by the shoulder, and glared into her face with a threatening look. She neither moved, nor resisted, but returned his glance with cold, defying eyes.

"Strike," she said, in a low, deep voice. "You who have seen a woman drown before your eyes need not hesitate to kill another."

Where had he heard that voice before? Where had he seen that look? And, above all, who was it that recalled that terrible night on the rock to him again at the deathbed of his child? He relinquished his hold upon her and staggered back.

"Who are you?" he asked, repeating the question he had asked her before.

"Ellen Meadows," she replied, as she had replied before.

He turned away, and, reaching his own room, he knew not how, fell upon the floor in a deep swoon.

A fortnight passed in the dreary hallucinations of brain fever before he opened his eyes to sunlight and reason again, a strangely altered man.

The first object that met his gaze was the governess, sitting near the bed quietly sewing.

A mental revolution had taken place in him during his illness. He no longer regarded her with abhorrence. He forgot that he had accused, and more than half-suspected, her of having destroyed his wife and children.

All that had merged into a dream, a part, it seemed, of his delirium. He was glad to see her there. He was pleased to think that she had nursed him through his illness. He did not puzzle himself over the change in his feelings. It satisfied him that it should be so.

Her constant devotion at the bedsides of his children and himself had broken the governess' health. She was plainly very ill, too ill to leave his house when he was able to be about again.

It was a part of his strange mental change that he should now devote himself to her. He came to think of little else than her welfare, moving about with a weak, dazed air that was now habitual to him. He obeyed her slightest wish.

As time went by, Miss Meadows grew no better, but Darnley did not perceive it. An idea was at work in his mind, and he was preparing to execute it.

Whether it was some covert suggestion of hers, or his own idea, he did not know, but he had resolved to make Miss Meadows his wife. He did not love her, but he had become accustomed to her; moreover, he said to himself that he ought to make her some sort of reparation for his former injustice to her.

He did not see the strange gleam of triumph in the governess' eyes when he proposed to her. He merely saw that she seemed to be pleased, and that she would make no objection to his wishes.

He insisted that there should be no delay, and she did not remonstrate. With a terrible effort of her will, she conquered her increasing weakness and deceived him with hopes of her speedy recovery.

The wedding took place quietly, and with none but the necessary witnesses; when it was over, she seemed feverishly anxious to be left alone with her husband.

When they were together, she turned suddenly towards him and said:

"Do you know that I shall not outlast the day?"

He stared at her in speechless dismay.

"Oh, no!" he cried. "You are needlessly alarming yourself and me."

"I speak the truth," she said. "I know very well that my end is approaching, and before I die I must reveal my secret." She feebly rose and stood before him. "Do you remember, Jarvis Darnley, a certain night, seven years ago, when you sat with a woman upon a ledge of rocks beside a pool near a little country town? Do you remember that that was the last scene in what to you had been a pleasant Summer comedy, and to her a deep and sorrowful tragedy? You had deluded her

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and broken her heart for a little amusement. She had trusted you, and you had laughed at her faith in you. Do you recall how she met her death?"

"Why speak of that now?" said Darnley anxiously. "It was all over years ago. There was no reparation to be made."

"She told you," continued his wife hoarsely, "that she would exact justice from you to the full—that she would repay you every pang you had ever cost her. Jarvis Darnley, she has kept her word. I am Helen Fielding!"

Darnley made no reply. The weak mind of the poor wretch was absolutely paralysed. He could only stare and groan.

"I was not drowned that night. I fell into the water so near the shore that, by the aid of some bushes, I succeeded in crawling out, numbed, dazed, and cruelly wounded. These scars are the seals of that night's work. Knowing you would search for me, I hid until you were gone.

"I could no longer face my friends after what had happened; besides, for all my purposes, it was better that I should be thought dead. Therefore, I left the place secretly that night. You are the only living being who knows that my bones are not lying at the bottom of that pool. I came to this town and hired a lodging near you, where I could keep you under my eye.

"At the proper time I entered your family. You did not recognise me; I was too cruelly changed. Then my vengeance began. Jarvis Darnley, there is such a power as Will—a power stronger than material weapons, and, supported by such wrongs as mine, it was invincible. I did not destroy your wife and children by material means, but I *willed* that they should die. I concentrated my whole energy into the hope and wish, and I succeeded. I willed that you should be under my influence and that you should marry me. I have accomplished all.

"The wrong you did me seven years ago has been bitterly expiated. For every pain I suffered you have been repaid. The justice you were too heartless to do me then you have done me to-day. I am satisfied."

As she finished, her voice failed and her face whitened out to the colour of marble. With a low sigh, she fell back and died, with a strange, sad smile upon her lips.

When the servants entered the room, they found Jarvis Darnley sitting upon the floor, playing with his fingers and laughing inanely to himself.

The weak remains of his mind had gone. Bitterly had he expiated his folly and sin. But by what occult means the strange woman had justified herself—by what mysterious force or mental power—must be left to the better science of a future day to discover.

Charles L. Hildreth.

The son of the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony told me this story.

On the evening of a dark and lowering day in late autumn a closed carriage was driven to the door of an inn in a manufacturing town of Derbyshire, from which alighted a woman closely cloaked and veiled. She seemed to know that the landlord was a kind-hearted man, and one to be trusted. She called him aside, and said, without raising her veil but in a voice of rare sweetness, and evidently that of a young person:

"I must trust you, good sir, with more, perhaps, than life. I wish you to serve me without asking a question. I can give you my word, in the outset, that no harm can come to you on my account in any legal way. I must be married. I must be a wife within this hour; and you must find me a husband. I only ask that you will find a man who can legally take a wife; a man, not a rascal; and a man who will take three hundred pounds and give his solemn pledge never to seek me, nor to speak to me after the final word of the marriage ceremony shall have been pronounced. If you can find such a man, and bring him hither, and then bring a willing clergyman, you will do me a great favour."

"But the license, madam."

"I am provided. I have a special licence, wanting only the name of the bridegroom."

It took the host some little time to make up his mind that the lady was in earnest, and that all else was right so far as the law was concerned. When he was satisfied upon these points he nodded and pleasantly smiled. Just the man required was in his employ. He went out into his stables, where he found Mark Conroy at work over a favourite horse. Mark was a splendid specimen of physical and mental manhood. Nearly six feet tall, perfectly proportioned, with features regular and handsome, an eye like a well of light, and a clustering mass of nut-brown curls setting off his shapely head, he was a man such as might win the love and esteem of any woman; and the only reason why he had not married or courted one of the many damsels who sought to attract him was that his love for his beautiful horses engrossed his whole heart.

Mark heard the landlord's story, and went with him into the private apartment where the lady was, determined to have the request from her own lips; and she made it, though, when she had seen him, standing so strong and so proud before her, she faltered considerably. But she got through with it, claiming from him the pledge before-mentioned. While she spoke he tried by every means in his power to gain a glimpse of her face, but in vain. Yet he did not miss her voice. It was very sweet to his ear. He loved music, and he did not think he should ever forget the rich, pure tones of that voice. It was to him an index to her character. Never a coarse woman with such breathing of music.

"My dear lady," he said, with a respectful inclination of the head, "I will accept the money which you offer, because I think I can make a good use of it. Ordinarily I would not listen for a moment, but now three hundred pounds may be the weight in the balance that shall make my whole future; and, added to this, I may serve you. Not for a hundred

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times three hundred pounds would I lend myself to a plot that could work harm to yourself."

"It will save me, sir! Oh, it will save me!'

"Then I am ready."

"And—I have your promise——"

"I have given my word. It has never yet been broken, and I do not think to *your* harm I shall now make my first false step."

Somehow the lady appeared to be more shy than she was at first, and once or twice she moved away from Mark, as though she were afraid of him, and crouched nearer to the landlord.

Near at hand lived an accommodating rector. He came in, fully understanding the work he was to do, and after a few whispered words with the lady, he signified his readiness to proceed. The name of Mark Conroy was filled into the license, after which the work was quickly done.

"Must I sign the register?" the newly-made wife asked uneasily.

The clergyman insisted upon it. The law required it.

Mark signed his name, in a bold, strong, round hand. Then the lady took the pen, and tremblingly wrote a name, saying:

"That is not the name by which I am known, but I have a sacred right to it."

She had written "Cordelia Temple."

She gave to the rector five pounds—to the host five more; and then she counted out six crisp, new fifty pound notes to her husband. Mark took them, and put them into his pocket, and then he drew from his purse a half-sovereign of gold, and laying it upon the post of a big oaken chair, he placed the edge of his pocket-knife upon it, and with a single blow of a piece of wood he cut it into two equal parts, one of which he handed to his wife.

"Lady," he said, "I need not tell you that this, to me, is, and must ever be while I live, a serious matter. Do not tremble. You have my word! But will you not take this bit of gold, and keep it in remembrance of the man whose name you can wear when you will, and who must henceforth be true to you?"

She caught the piece of gold with a spasmodic clutch and turned away, as though to hide an emotion which she did not dare to have witnessed.

One step, and Mark Conroy was by her side. He took her hand, and raised it to his lips.

"I do this reverently," he said, almost in a whisper. "And now, lady," he added, lifting his head proudly, and stepping back, "know that I shall be true to the vows this night taken upon myself. If, in the time to come, Mark Conroy can in any way serve you, you may command him without fear. He will never intrude, and he will never take advantage of any service he may happily render. Adieu! May God and the good angels watch over you, and bless you always."

And with this he turned away, and was gone. The lady could not have spoken if she would.

"I suppose," said the landlord, as the lady was ready to depart, "that you would have this kept a profound secret?"

"No! No!" she cried vehemently. "If men should be upon my track—if they should trace me to this place—tell them that I am married. Tell them exactly what you have seen; but for *his* sake—my—my *husband's*—do not give his name. Will you promise this?"

The good landlord promised, and very shortly afterwards the lady's carriage was whirling rapidly away into the gloom towards Cheshire.

The clock in the tower of the old stone church was striking the hour of nine as the strange woman drove away from the Derbyshire inn. Two hours later—as the same bell-hammer was pealing forth the eleventh hour—another carriage was driven rapidly up, from which alighted two gentlemen—one an elderly man, with a hard, hawk-like face, and the other younger, and evidently a gentleman cad.

Mark Conroy heard the arrival, and came in to see.

The gentlemen were eager and breathless. Had anything been seen of a young lady, appearing as the man described?

Mark contrived to whisper into the host's ear, to direct his questions.

"How old was the lady?" asked the publican.

"Nineteen," answered the old man.

"Was she handsome?"

"She had the name—the shameless vixen—of being the handsomest girl in Staffordshire!"

And then the host told his story—told it as it was, all save that he represented the husband as having gone in pursuit, not to molest the lady, but to protect her into Staffordshire, for he had determined to serve her if he could.

The younger man swore a big oath, and the elder man swore a bigger. Their plans were shattered, and they were crestfallen and chagrined.

Before they went away, the younger man discovered our hero, who had remained respectfully in the background.

"Hallo, Mark, is that yourself?"

And he advanced and extended a hand with perfect freedom of manner.

"Yes, my lord. I am stopping here just now."

"Ah! Say, Mark, did you see this girl we have been talking about?"

"Why, my lord, as for seeing her, I cannot say I did; but I saw the carriage, and saw a woman get into it and whisk away."

"Well, old fellow, there went the most dainty bit of womanhood in the Kingdom. Confound it! I supposed I had her hard and fast. Sir John is her guardian, and had given her to me; but she has given us the slip. Locks, and bolts, and iron bars have been of no use. If she's been honestly married, Sir John's guardianship is at an end. But, say, Mark, I have a magnificent filly, which I wish you to take in hand. She promises tremendous things."

Mark said he would give the filly a try, and shortly afterwards the gentlemen took their leave.

"Who was that?" demanded the host, as they drove away.

"That," replied Mark, "was the Earl of Bentley—Dick Temple."

And they all went their ways in life as seemed to them best.

Mark Conroy from that night became a new man. He borrowed books, and read and studied, and went at French and German. He had said that three hundred pounds might be the making of him, nor did he make a mistake. The owner of a place near Derby—a raiser of thoroughbred stock—was glad to sell him a half-interest, and in a very few years the horses from the stables of Monkton and Conroy stood at the head of the list in England.

The Earl of Bentley let his favourite filly go to pay a betting debt, and Mark bought the animal for twenty guineas. Four years later that filly was known and celebrated under the name of *Lightfoot*, and Mark sold her to the Earl of Derby for ten thousand pounds, and she won the money back for her noble owner in one season.

This was but one circumstance of many. Mark Conroy had one great aim in life, and in that direction he bent every energy.

At the age of two-and-twenty he sold out all interest in his Derby property, and his funds in the hands of his bankers amounted to more than eighty thousand pounds. He had not made one mistake in all his ventures, and Fortune had literally smiled upon him.

And through it all—by day, when business seemed to entirely engross him, and by night, in the still thoughtful watches, one influence was never absent—the music of that sweet voice he had heard in the old Derbyshire inn. Oh! what should come of it? At all events, the thought held him pure and true, and led him to the station of a manhood that any man might covet, for it was pure and true, and elevated, and intellectual, and, above all else, robust in glowing, glorious health.

Eight years had elapsed since the day on which Mark

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Conroy was married, and he had grown from four-and-twenty to two-and-thirty, when he took it into his head to go for a tour on the Continent. He went to Paris first, and thence into Germany. From city to city, seeking a pleasure he did not readily find, until at length he found himself in the quaint, old walled city of Ulm, on the Danube.

He was standing in the curiously-constructed hall of a quaintly-constructed inn, with innumerable nooks and corners and dim recesses, when he was attracted by the sound of a familiar voice. It was the voice of the Earl of Bentley, and he was talking with his valet, a dark-visaged, powerful rascal, evidently engaged because of his physical strength and daring.

"*She will be alone in her chamber an hour after dark,*" said the voice of the Earl. "*I have bribed her maid. My boat is at the old landing. I must not be seen here. Will you carry the lady to that boat?*"

The valet said he would do it. He knew just how to accomplish the task. He would bear the lady to the boat, and she should make no outcry.

"*Once she is in my power,*" went on the Earl, "*all else is simple. We will prove her professed marriage all a sham, and she shall marry me, or*——" The rest of the sentence was lost.

Conroy's heart beat hard and fast. He knew very well who was the lady alluded to. He inquired of the landlord, however, and was informed that the occupant of the suite he had designated was an English lady, who had been with him several weeks—Lady Isabel Cordelia, of Templeton. She was a beautiful woman, but evidently unhappy.

Mark Conroy found the suite of apartments, and did not lose sight of the entrance. About an hour after dark he saw the maid come out, and saw her speak with a man who was hiding in a recess. Shortly after that, this man was joined by another whom he had called by a low whistle, and the two entered the chamber from which the maid had come. A few moments, during which the watcher's heart beat furiously, and then came the sound of a smothered cry.

With a bound Conroy was in the chamber, where he saw a lady struggling in the grasp of two men. With a blow of his fist that might have felled an ox, he sent the valet to the floor; then with a backward sweep he knocked the other against the wall; and then, winding his left-arm around the lady he held her in safety, while with his right he drew a pistol and levelled it.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the valet, when he had picked himself up and looked upon the man who had knocked him down, "it's the horse-trainer, Conroy!"

"And you will find him something more than that if you do not take yourself out of this. Go, tell your master that Mark Conroy knows all, and that if he is in Ulm to-morrow morning he may suffer for it!"

The two men slunk away, and then Conroy led the lady to a seat, and would have let her go, but she clung to him. He was able to speak with comparative calmness, because he had carefully prepared himself for the meeting.

"Lady, I have not forgotten my promise. I have watched over you when you knew it not. You may command me even yet."

She looked up into his face, still clinging to his strong arm, and a variety of emotions were shadowed upon her surpassingly beautiful face.

"You are Mark Conroy?"

"I am."

"Do you know who I am?"

"I do."

"Do you know that you ever saw me before?"

"I cannot say that I know, but my heart tells me that it is so—it tells me that you have the mate to this."

And he drew from his bosom, where it had hung suspended from a silken cord about his neck, a tiny bag of chamois-skin, from which he took a semi-disc of gold.

A moment she stood irresolute, and then, while a rich glow suffused her cheeks, mounting to her temples and brow, and imparting to the lustrous eyes a living light, she drew from her own bosom, where it had been kept in a velvet pouch, the other half of the golden half-sovereign.

Conroy could contain his great heart no longer. Grasping both the lady's hands, and looking earnestly and frankly into her face, he said:

"Lady, from that hour of the other years—that hour in the old Derbyshire inn—I have kept the faith then pledged. Your voice betrayed to me a pure and worthy woman, and I have held the sweet remembrance in love and true devotion. I dare not, knowing who and what you are, ask you to share my lot; but, oh!—if you——"

She put out her hand and stopped him,

"Mark Conroy, from that same hour I have not lost sight of you. I know how you have lived—how you have thrived and prospered——"

"But," he cried, interrupting her, "you do not know that the one thought of yourself has been the blessed spirit of my uprising."

"But—*I have hoped it,*" she said.

"You—have—hoped?"

"Oh! My husband! If you claim me for your wife, and love me always, I shall be happy!"

And so, after years of waiting, Mark Conroy found his reward; and he was not prouder nor more happy than was the Lady Isabel Cordelia, heiress of the vast estates of the Earl of Templeton. A distant cousin inherited the title, but the wealth was hers.

Lord Bentley, when he learnt the truth, not only gave up his striving and his persecution, but he descended to beg that the story of his fruitless endeavours might not be told in England.

But in England Mark Conroy and his wife lived no more. They found a pleasanter home on the Rhine, where were countrymen enough to make it home-like, and where they were estimated in Society for the grand qualities of head and heart that endeared them to all with whom they came in social contact.

Robert Macdonald.

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Pink and Grey.

The Tale of a Rectified Misunderstanding.

It was strange, but my cousin Fonda and I looked like twins. We resembled each other a great deal more than we did our own sisters. To be sure, there was nothing striking about either of us, though Fonda was very pretty. We were of medium height, oval faces, dark hair and eyes, and regular features. She had far more bloom and sparkle than I—as well she might have—for she was a rich man's petted daughter, while I was a poor seamstress who earned my living by the day. Fonda went everywhere, had everything. It seemed to me that I had nothing but my work. There was always plenty of that for me.

There was one thing Fonda wasn't allowed to have—that was a lover. Uncle Algernon wouldn't have one of his girls married before they were twenty-five, he said—he had seen enough of the folly of early marriages. So when Wendell Larne commenced paying attention to me, I found that I did have something which my envied cousin Fonda hadn't.

He was the best fellow in the world, was Wende, and made my life much brighter and happier. Not that he could take me to the opera and such places—Wende hadn't much money—but he could always be ready for an evening walk in the park with me, and I felt quite proud when I went to church on Sunday, my arm in his.

That Spring, Aunt Fannie—Cousin Fonda's mother—died, and they sent for me to come to Thornhill and make up mourning for the girls.

Thornhill was Uncle Algernon's country-house, about four miles out of the city. It was a lovely place, and they kept a carriage, in which the girls drove into town nearly every day.

They sent for me, and when I arrived I was shocked to see what a change grief had made in Fonda. She had wept her cheeks as white as a sheet. The other girls didn't realise their loss so much, being younger, only twelve and fourteen years old.

"Oh, Cousin Annie, it's dreadful to have your mother die—your own dear mother!" she said to me.

"I know it, Fonda, and you'll miss her more and more as the years go on!" I said.

I had.

And now that she was an orphan, too, my cousin seemed to take to me as she never had done before. Not that she had ever been unkind or slighted me when our paths came together—she was always cordial and kind—but she seemed to find my quiet ways more congenial than when she had been gay.

She looked very pretty in her mourning dresses.

"See," she said, one day, leading the way into her dressing-room, "here is my last new dress. Poor mamma had just ordered it for me. I am sure I never can bear to wear anything so gay now!"

"I don't think it is gay, Fonda. I think it is lovely!" I said.

It was pink and grey—two delicate tints of the same quality of silk combined. "And here are the hat, gloves, and parasol—the hat of the same material as the dress, the gloves beautifully matched—aren't they?—the parasol the same shade of grey lined with pink. I wore the dress once—only once!"

Fonda stood lost in reverie.

"I wish I hadn't gone that time. I wouldn't if I'd known my mother wasn't going to live!" she broke out, and then turned away to a window.

"Where, Fonda? What do you mean?"

"Oh, never mind, Annie. Do you know, I can't bear the sight of this dress now? I am going to give it to you, if you will accept it."

"To me?"

"Yes; hat, gloves, parasol—everything. Take them, Annie. The dress will fit you as well as if it was made for you."

"Oh, no, dear Fonda, I couldn't think of taking this exquisite silk! By-and-bye you will want to wear it yourself."

"No, I never shall. I give it to you, Annie. It is yours."

"I can't take it, Fonda."

But she motioned the dress towards me, and went out of the room.

I was quite nervous, and my hands trembled as I took up the exquisite, fragrant gloves. It seemed as if I ought not to take such an expensive present as that beautiful costume from anyone. I opened and shut the parasol, and then opened it again as I caught my reflection in the dressing-glass, and saw that it was very becoming.

Just as I put the things down and went to my sewing, a maid brought me a note.

"Just come, and the boy said he would wait for an answer, Miss Belton."

It was from Wende:

"My Own Dear Annie,—*My father, mother, and sister are here from the country to spend a few days. I have told them about my little lady, and they are very anxious to see you. I will call for you to-morrow (Sunday), at ten o'clock, to dine with us.*

"Wende."

A moment's tumultuous emotion filled me. That little note had so much signification for me—for Wende and I were not, exactly speaking, engaged. It was tacitly understood that we liked each other, that some time, perhaps, we might be married; but now that he wanted to introduce me to his family it was equivalent to announcing our betrothal. So my heart stood still for a moment, then bounded quickly, sending the blood into my pale face.

I wrote in reply, "I will be ready," and dispatched the boy.

When I came back to my work I paused again by the pink and grey dress to look thoughtfully at it. How lovely it would be to wear to-morrow! I had no new Spring things, and my winter ones were shabby—very shabby, it seemed to me, now, thinking of Wende's father and mother, and his sister, who was called the beauty of her native village. I lifted the dainty hat, with its rosebuds and pink feather. I was really pretty in it, and I did so want to wear it.

The next morning Fonda was ill—confined to her room with a sick headache, and could on no account be disturbed. So I did not speak to her about the pink and grey silk confection, for I had concluded to wear it. In the vigils of the night I decided that my brown velveteen would not do. I had a horror for looking like a shop-girl arrayed in rusty finery.

Wende would think me his "little lady" indeed. I thought, when I was dressed, I looked as beautiful as my Cousin Fonda ever did.

But I was disagreeably conscious of "borrowed plumes," and when I saw Wende's trap rolling up the avenue I shrouded my head in a large drab veil, and wrapped myself up in a long shawl.

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But when we were half a mile from the house I said the wind was not so cold, after all, and put my veil in my pocket, and let the shawl slip from my shoulders.

"Why, how pretty you look, Anne; haven't you a new dress?" asked Wende.

"Yes, a present from my cousin Fonda. She has gone into mourning."

"It's very pretty. And I suppose she can afford to make you a present if she likes?"

"Oh, yes."

I saw that he was very much gratified with my appearance.

Well, Wende's father and mother were very nice people, and his sister a most lovely girl, and I had a delightful day; but at length night came, and I got into the trap to return.

"Is anything the matter with me, Wende?—anything wrong in my appearance, I mean?" I asked, as I was settling in the carriage.

"No; why?"

"That gentleman over there is staring at me so."

He was a tall, very handsome-looking young man—looking at me very hard indeed; and not with an impertinent gaze of admiration, but with a rather surprised and not very pleasant look.

"Haven't you ever seen him before?" asked Wende.

"No."

"It must be the new dress," said Wende, with a smile, as he turned the horse's head.

As the wheel ground the kerbstone, I saw the gentleman jump into a cab.

As we drove to Thornhill I told Wende I had had a very happy time, and he assured me that his family were delighted with me; and we, then and there, agreed to be married in the autumn.

When the carriage stopped at the side-door of Thornhill it was dusk, yet I distinctly saw the cab with the strange gentleman whirl by me, and I was quite alarmed; but Wende said it was only a coincidence. His way probably lay in our direction.

Well, a day or two passed. When Fonda recovered I did not mention that I had worn the dress; but I thought I would take it now.

And now I discovered that my cousin Fonda looked worse every day; then I learnt that it was something different from her mother's death which was preying upon her.

"I'll tell you Annie, for I know I can trust you," said she. "Last Christmas, one of my friends introduced me to her cousin, Mr. Forsyth Croxwood. He understood that papa and mamma would not receive young gentlemen, and so we have met at Mrs. Appleton's house all the winter and Spring. I like him ever so much, though, since mamma died, I have felt condemned for deceiving her and going a walk with him about a month ago, in that very pink and grey silk I showed you. But there is nothing wrong about it. I think I ought to be allowed to see Mr. Croxwood. Still, I have not dared. He wrote me a note just after mamma died, and asked me to let him call; but I had to refuse. But last Monday I saw him going to Ethel's, and I slipped on my hat and went over. But, Annie, he wouldn't speak to me; he was downright rude! Ethel didn't know what to make of it any more than I. And, oh, I have nearly cried myself to death! It seems as if my heart would burst!"

"Do you love him so very much, Fonda?"

"I love him dearly! It is my first, and it will be my last, love!"

Now, I had lately grown very much attached to Fonda, and I secretly thought it a shame that she couldn't have a lover, so, having learnt all about Mr. Croxwood, and finished the mourning-dresses at Thornhill, I went home to the city, and, on that very first evening, called on Mr. Croxwood. It was a rainy evening, and I wore my old velveteen, though Fonda had pressed the pink-and-grey silk upon me, and I had it packed safely away among my possessions.

I called at the Albion Hotel where Mr. Croxwood was staying, and was shown into his private room.

Here I introduced myself, and had no difficulty in asserting my identity, as he assured me that I looked very much like Fonda.

"I *have been* deeply attached to your beautiful cousin, Miss Belton," he said, when I mentioned her name; "but I have lost faith in her. I have much desired to visit her at her home, but she has always refused me. Judge, then, of my indignation when I saw her driving, last Sunday a week ago, with a young gentleman who was freely admitted to Thornhill in the evening. She is duping me, and I will not be a plaything for any woman."

"Sunday—driving—oh!—oh!" I stammered. At length my wits returned. "Mr. Croxwood," said I, "you would like to be friends again with my cousin Fonda, would you not?"

"If it were possible; but I do not believe it is. I can never forgive deception."

"If you will come to my house to-morrow evening I will promise you information which will relieve you of this misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding?" He shook his head.

But he promised to come.

I made my simple rooms fresh with country roses which Wende's sister had promised me, and which I had been looking for, and sent a note to Fonda to come in the evening, as I had news of Mr. Croxwood which would cheer her, I said. Of course she came.

I had been dressed an hour in the pink and grey silk, and Wende was there when the Thornhill carriage stopped at the door, and Fonda came up.

Of course she could expect no explanation before Wende, though she looked expectant, and seemed uneasy, but at last the bell rang, and Mr. Croxwood was shown in.

He stopped at the entrance, and looked from Fonda to me. Evidently he did not know which was which.

"Do not be deceived again by appearances, Mr. Croxwood," said I. "This is Miss Annie Belton; opposite is my cousin Fonda."

He advanced, looking at Fonda, pale, in her black dress, and I saw his keen eyes soften with tears.

"And this young gentleman, Mr. Wendell Larne, is the one with whom I drove a week ago last Sunday," I added, and Wende rose and bowed—with a smile.

That set the matter all right. He found a seat instantly by Fonda, and, though she was very much bewildered, she looked very happy. Wende and I managed to leave them alone a little while, soon, and then I managed to see Fonda a moment alone, and explain how I had worn the pink and grey dress.

I don't know whether his wife's death softened Uncle Algernon's heart, or Mr. Croxwood won his way somehow, but my Cousin Fonda was married that summer, and I was as happily married in the autumn.

Esther Serle Kenneth.

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The Don't Worry Club.

And the Mission it Fulfilled.

"For Heaven's sake, Myra, stop worrying! What good does it do? Take things easy!"

"And if I did, John, I'd like to know what would become of you! Somebody has to do the worrying, and as *you* won't, *I* must. You would have been bankrupt long ago if it hadn't been for me. We can't both spend money like water! Here you come home with a new suit of clothes and overcoat when you could have worn your others another winter as well as not. I need a new dress *dreadfully* and now I can't have it, because you spend all the money on your precious self!"

"I declare, I never saw such a woman in my life! If there isn't any *real* thing to worry about, you have the faculty of hatching up one. Who said you couldn't have your frock? Go and get it, don't worry about the money; I'll attend to that. You don't see me fretting and stewing over every little thing!"

"No, because I have always done it for you. I save and save, watching the pennies while you spend the pounds."

Tears were imminent, so Mr. Miller said soothingly: "Well, there, there, ducky, don't do it any more, it doesn't pay," giving her the affectionate kiss and the pat which usually ended their little squabbles.

The next day Mrs. Miller received a message from her husband that he would not be home that night to dinner as he was invited to dine with some friends at the club.

Approaching his home about midnight, he was surprised to see the house lighted from garret to cellar instead of a dim light in the hall as on many (alas! too many) previous occasions. He wondered what was going on, and inserted his latch-key rather impatiently. Entering the sitting-room he found it deserted, but hearing gay voices in the dining-room, proceeded to investigate.

There he found his wife entertaining company.

"Why, what's all this?" said John, beaming cordially upon the merry company, but with a sinking heart at thought of the amount of gas burning all over the house.

"This is the first meeting of the 'Don't Worry' Club," gaily explained his wife. "I invited the ladies to dinner and we organised the club this evening. The gentlemen came later to accompany them home.

When the last guest had departed Mrs. Miller kissed her husband affectionately, saying:

"I'm so glad you thought of it, John; it's going to be lovely! I feel better already, and in future will take things easy; let them come as they will. If the house tumbles about our heads, I'm never going to worry any more. After receiving your message to-day, knowing that I should be alone to-night, I thought it a good time to organise, so went and invited them all to dinner. We had a lovely little dinner; everything passed off beautifully."

John was busy thinking and did not reply.

"Oh, I ordered my new dress to-day!" she rattled on. "It's going to be beautiful! I went to Perry's. Might as well have it right while I'm about it, if it does cost more. They let me have it for ten guineas. Of course I needed a hat to go with it and selected a perfect love. It's just too sweet! Oh, I feel so much better and free from care, and *so* glad we ormed the club!"

Mr. Miller did not sleep much that night, for figures were dancing a lively jig in his head, and he kept wishing he had not bought his new clothes. The next night when he came home to dinner his wife was absent, having left word that if she did not return he was to call for her about ten o'clock at Mrs. Brown's, as she might possibly dine there.

Mr. Miller ate his dinner alone, but everything had lost flavour, and his appetite was not up to the mark. When he had gone through the form of eating he smoked a cigar and read his paper; then becoming restless and lonely, lay down on the couch and slept, waking just in time to go Mrs. Miller at the appointed hour. "I've had a lovely time!" said she, on their way home. "I'm never going to stay alone again in the evenings after this. When you stay at the club, I'm going out too."

"But I was at home this evening."

"I know it, but I thought you could stand it *once*, when I have been alone many, many times."

"Well, hereafter, Myra, when you go out to dinner do not order a seven-pound joint for me to eat alone. It would be better to have a small steak and not have so much left over."

"*I* didn't order it. I told Sarah to get something nice for you if I didn't return, and I knew she'd do it."

"But, my dear, think of the expense!"

"Oh, I'm not worrying about that! Time enough when it comes. Don't forget that I am president of the 'Don't Worry Club,' John."

And John thought about it a great deal.

On Saturday morning the "president" said: "Well, I suppose you won't be home to dinner as it's your regular club night, and I'll go over to Mrs. Fraser's."

"Yes, I will be home. Dinners at the club cost money, and our bills will be so heavy this month with your new dress and hat, and so much company, and——"

"Your new suit and overcoat," put in his wife. "Yes, I see, but there is no use thinking of such things beforehand. Undoubtedly something will turn up to help you out."

"What, I'd like to know, but my salary?"

"But you may get a rise, or your uncle John might send you a cheque, or——"

"Did he ever send one?"

"No, but he *might*—you have to look on the bright side. I tell you, John, you should join a 'Don't Worry' Club, then you'd feel as happy and light-hearted as I do!"

"One member in the family is enough. I'll be home to dinner to-night. Good-bye."

"Very well, then, I'll not go to Mrs. Fraser's, for I'd rather spend the evening with you," kissing him affectionately.

That evening while he smoked she sat on the arm of his chair and smoothed the wrinkles on his forehead, which she knew were caused by the change in the state of affairs. Being tender-hearted, she really felt sorry for him.

"I tell you, dearie, let us form a club all by ourselves and call it the 'We'll-worry-all-we-want-to' Club. You do your share and I'll do mine, and we'll carry the worries together. It's too much for one, both must help. I carried the burden so long that my strength gave out, and I determined to shift the load to your shoulders for awhile. Let's have our enjoyments together, too, it isn't half so expensive."

"You are right, little woman, I'll do my part in the future."

"My dress is only to cost three guineas, John; I stretched the price a bit to frighten you, and my new hat is an old one done up. The other night when I thought it was time for you to be coming home, I sent Katie upstairs to turn on the gas and it had only been burning a short time. Now, you see, I'm not such a bad little wife, after all, am I?"

John caught her in his arms, exclaiming:

"You're a perfect treasure!" **Herbert Malcolm.**

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And They Struck.

Papa (from the next room): "Ethel, aren't you going to light the gas in there?" Ethel: "Yes, papa; we were just speaking of—er—striking a match."

An Industrious Youth.

"Claudia, is the young man industrious to whom you are engaged?" "Industrious? Why, papa, he said he intended to propose to me a month ago, but was too busy."

Rivals in Love.

Dolly: "Jack said that he had a business engagement to-night." Dasherly: "Yes, he mentioned something to me about asking old Millyuns for his daughter's hand."

A Gentle Hint.

"Can you tie a real lover's knot, my dear?" inquired Bertie. "No," replied Masie, hiding her blushes with her fan; "but our new clergyman can do it very nicely."

No Responsibility.

"Why is it," they asked, "that you let your husband have his own way in everything?" "Because," she replied, "I like to have someone to blame when things go wrong."

She Paid Him Back.

Horrified Parent: "And you dare to tell me that you kissed that young Hankinson last evening!" Weeping Daughter: "Yes; but the—mean thing k-kissed me first!"

Demonstration.

"Clara," said her mother severely, "did I see Mr. Spoodle holding your hand last night?" "Yes; but he was showing me how he saw some people walking along the other night."

He Knows Now—Worse Luck!

He: "Tell me, confidentially, how much did that hat cost you?" She: "George, there is but one way in which you can obtain the right to inspect my millinery bills." He popped.

Good Advice.

He: "Ah, if I were rich and lovely as you are I know what I would do." She: "Marry a count, I suppose." He: "No, not at all." She: "What then?" He: "If I were you I'd marry me."

Disillusioned!

"Do you reside in this city?" asked a masked man of a masked lady at a masked ball the other evening. He felt awful when she said to him in a low voice: "Don't be so silly, John; I know you by the mole on your thumb." It was his wife.

Why Was He so Particular?

"Frank," she said, softly, "I have concluded to do without a new hat and send for mother with the money. It won't take much to pay her expenses here." "My dear," he cried, excitedly, "the idea of your wearing that old hat another day is too horrible for me to endure, and I'll never enter this house again till you get a new one."

Made Good Progress.

Miss Passe: "Mamma tells me that I did not begin talking until I was nearly four years old." Miss Young: "How remarkable! But you have caught up since then, haven't you?"

Spiteful Creature.

Rosie: "I wonder is it true that one's likely to catch something from being kissed." Maud: "Of course not. You've been kissed enough, but you haven't caught anything yet, have you?"

Distinctly Inadvisable.

Minnie: "Don't you wish we women were strong enough to defend ourselves like men?" Muriel: "No. We should lose the satisfaction of telling those hateful men just what we should like to do to them."

How Silly of Her.

Lily (earnestly): "I want to ask you a question, Bob." Bob (also earnestly): "What is it, dearest?" Lily (still earnestly): "If you had never met me, would you have loved me just the same?"

Why He Grumbled.

"I married for money," said the gloomy man. "Wasn't there a woman attached to it?" asked the cynic. "Of course there was," with increased gloom; "so much attached to it that she has never parted with a penny!"

Would She?

"Ernest," said Estelle, with a shy smile, "your glove is split. You ought to have someone to keep you in repair, and sew buttons on your coats." "You wouldn't like to—to—to be a sister to me, would you, Estelle?" said Ernest.

The Hardships of Flat Life.

"He's a pretty collie," said Miss Kennelworth, "but it's a funny thing that he wags his tail up and down, instead of sideways." "The poor thing," said Mrs. Parke, "has always lived with us in our flat, and that's the only way he *could* wag it."

Audacity Won.

"So you would not take me to be twenty?" said a young lady to her partner, whilst they were looking over some music together one evening. "What would you take me for, then?" "For better, for worse," replied he, and he was accepted.

Practising Time.

Ponsonby (somewhat boastfully): "I may say, Miss Blitlerwick, that I am quite an adept at athletics. I can row, ride—either horse or bike—swim, spar, jump, and run." Miss Blitlerwick (sweetly): "Here comes papa. Do let me see you jump and run."

Denied the Accusation.

He: "This is a nice state of things, and we have been married only four months. I'm almost crazy at seeing you flirting with all these fellows. You recollect what you promised at the altar?" She: "Indeed I don't, dear. I was so nervous that I don't remember the least thing."

How He Proposed.

He: "I suppose it isn't too much to say that you and I have always led the fashion in our set, Miss Mabel?" She: "So people appear to think." "And it wouldn't do for me to be the last to adopt a new idea, would it?" "No, indeed!" "Well, have you noticed that everybody seems to be getting married lately?"

Gallantly Said!

Jones is nothing if not gallant. Mrs. Brown is exactly the same age as her husband, but she will not admit it. "My husband is forty," she said to some friends the other day; "you wouldn't believe it, but there's actually ten years' difference in our ages." "Impossible, dear madam!" hastily interposed Jones, anxious to say something agreeable; "I'm sure you look every day as young as he does."

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Dupes of Destiny.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

Writer of "The Bond Between."

FIFTIETH CHAPTER.

A Meeting on Danger Point.

When Marcella and her timid, half-dazed companion had clung together in a frightened silence during the journey to London, there had, all unconscious of their close proximity to each other, passed by in another train the man to whom Marcella was going, for whom her poor, loving heart was crying. Had Philip Nullius but guessed that when the telegram calling him to his constant little sweetheart's assistance was delivered at his London address—where he was making unceasing efforts to trace that unknown baby brother who had shared with him the love of the dead mother—that instead of being in the least danger, Marcella was fleeing to a haven of refuge, he would not have obeyed so blindly the imperious wording of the telegram that ran: "*Come to Marcella. Danger Point.*"

Without a moment's hesitation he had left his rooms and his train had barely steamed out of Paddington Station, than it was passed by the one bringing Marcella and her childish charge to London. It had been a long, anxious time for Philip, that fruitless search for those of his own blood, yearning to clasp the hand of one who had perhaps buffeted with the world's blows even as himself, and who may also have longed to gaze into the face of a kinsman; for, however humble of origin, blood was still thicker than water. Then there was that other dreadful knowledge he had obtained in so strange a way, and which he could not use, yet neither was he able to forget, and mingling with all his anxiety and personal uneasiness, there was ever the haunting thought of Marcella being exposed to all sorts of horrible dangers at the Court. He had, on receipt of the hasty summons from London, decided that, birth or no birth, he would not leave Crawley unless he took with him the woman he loved.

As he leant back in the train his thoughts wandered from his own private troubles to those of Lady Violet. He remembered having always been attracted to her by her intense love for Marcella, and yet he knew that between the aristocrat and the mysterious man with the black beard was a link of some sort. He could not think it one of crime; for his dear love's sake he would harbour no unkind thought of the beautiful aunt she loved, but a too keen instinct had warned him that Lady Violet knew more than she had dared to say.

Arriving at Crawley, he left the train and proceeded on foot towards the village. As he was passing through the barrier the porter recognised him and touched his cap civilly.

"Good day, sir. It's a long time since you came to Crawley, sir."

Philip smiled. He was very popular with the parishioners of the straggling village, and it had been a matter of regret that Fate should have stepped in between him and his work. Aloud he said pleasantly:

"Yes, Grig—my holiday has been a long one, protracted on account of business rather than pleasure." Then he added abruptly:

"I am going to see Miss Rust at the Court; I suppose things are much the same there? Quiet and—and happy?" He could hardly explain why he had asked the last question. It had been torn from him.

"'Appy, you said, sir?" And the weather-beaten face of the old man underwent a curious change—a shadow seemed to rest on it. "Well, I shouldn't like to say as things ain't well up at the Court, but of late there's been strange talk in the village as 'ow a cloud is restin' over it. Women steal about, sir, veiled very closely. And there's been strange men about as well, sir—comin' and goin', too, as though they was spies." He shook his old head wisely. "Aye, there's a cloud for certain hangin' over the Court."

Philip started. The garrulous old man's tongue had aroused his anxiety concerning Marcella. She had, then, he thought, wired for him to meet her on Danger Point, because she dared not ask him to the Court! He murmured a few kindly remarks to the old porter, and moved away. He was eager to be at the side of the girl he loved more intensely than ever, because he had always had to suppress the passion within him.

He hastened his steps involuntarily. It was growing dusk, and he remembered of old the grim character of the lonely rock known locally as Danger Point, and his heart feared for the brave girl who might be waiting so patiently for him, exposed to the numberless dangers that lurked for those who tempted Fate on the bleak surface of Danger Point.

As he hurried from the station and cut across the wooded undergrowth that divided the village into so straggling a community, he stopped suddenly. Coming towards him were two men, so deep in conversation that they did not even notice him. After one swift glance into one of the two faces, he uttered an exclamation and slipped swiftly into the shadow of a tree. Of all people, he would not have met Sir Cyprian Rust just then.

As they approached where he was standing, Sir Cyprian said coldly:

"So you threaten me, do you, Mr. Dick? Don't you think that rather an awkward attitude to take? What can your threats do to me?"

His companion laughed. And Philip noticed that he was a tall, flashy-looking man, with a careless, devil-may-care face and vivid blue eyes.

"Do to you? Why, queer your pitch for a very long time, my dear Sir Cyprian," was the laughing retort. "I wonder are you aware that the net is drawing very close, that probably unless some unforeseen accident happens, Scotland Yard will score a grand success in the capture of a very much 'wanted' aristocrat whose life has so long been a dual one?"

"Confound you!" was the quick reply that came softly from the baronet's lips. "You are playing your own game, I see! I suppose you have a price unless you are already bought?"

"I am not bought yet—but I don't mind telling you that I mean to make a good deal over this," was the cool reply.

"Suppose you have no chance of betraying me?" Sir Cyprian retorted slowly

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The other shrugged his shoulders. "It has taken me a long time to find you. Since that night when I saw you at the house of Lady Violet Frayne-Lennox, much has happened to prevent my looking you up," he laughed suddenly, and Philip wondered vaguely what made him think he had seen the man before. There was an odd resemblance—a tone in the voice—a note in the laugh that sent his thoughts trooping back to the tender story of his love—yet the thought was incredible, a phantasy of his own imagination; his mind was so full of Marcella that he heard her voice even in the tones of another belonging to one whom he guessed instinctively to be a social pariah.

In the meantime, Sir Cyprian drew the man's arm within his own with an assumption of friendliness, though Philip, watching keenly, saw his sapphire-like eyes glint savagely. "Come with me to the Court and you will have your price—I am not foolish enough to jeopardise my liberty in wrangling over terms."

The other laughed triumphantly. "So you have decided not to make an enemy of me, eh? It's just as well. I intend to be fooled by no one! As it is, I only managed to get back into England by a ruse!—my death is popularly supposed to be a thing of the past. But I will go with you to the Court, and we'll discuss terms there, my fine baronet. Jove!" he chuckled grimly, "wouldn't a few people love to see us now—the great chief and an old member!"

Sir Cyprian's mouth twisted in an ugly smile. He seemed to have aged considerably since Philip had last seen him—only his eyes retained their look of youth.

"Yes," he said, with a curious catch in his low voice, "we will come to terms at the Court. We will—settle up then, and you will not find me wanting in generosity either. We will throw in our lots together, Dick! You will not regret coming to the Court."

Then the two men passed on—the rogue and the greater rogue—and as they vanished from his sight, Philip shivered. Something weird and inexplicable seemed to have enveloped the two men. In the far distance the sun had just sunk in a streak of red fire, and it seemed to the watching man that they were vanishing into a sea of blood, that drew them on as with a lurid menace. So Sir Cyprian and his comrade passed from his sight.

The next moment Philip pulled himself together, and broke into a sharp run that quickly brought him out into the country, and in the direction of Danger Point. A brisk walk of twenty minutes brought him to the place where he knew Marcella would be waiting for him. The wind had risen, and the sound of the waves fell upon his ear with a mournful echo. The red had died out of the sky, and only a dull grey was there instead

As he looked round eagerly, his eyes sweeping the bleak headland in search of a well beloved face and figure that had waited for him, he did not notice a silent shape creep from behind a rock and steal towards him.

"Marcella," he called, "I am here, darling. Where are you?"

The sea moaned dismally, but Marcella did not answer, and as he was about to cry out again, a loud, sneering laugh sounded close behind him.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed, Mr. Nullius. I am here as Marcella's substitute, and am glad to meet you—again!"

Philip turned and saw the face of Edward Day.

"You!" he exclaimed sharply. "What does this mean?"

FIFTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

The Shadow that Passed.

The other laughed brutally.

"That instead of Marcella, you are to have a pleasant experience with me, Mr. Nullius! I have long waited for this day; now it has come at last!"

Philip faced him squarely. He realised that he had treachery to meet, and that the fate of Marcella depended upon the way in which he met it.

"What do you mean?"

The other drew nearer. "That you have walked into a nice little trap, Mr. Nullius," he said slowly, "and you will find it difficult to get out of it—that is, if you ever do get out of it!" he added significantly.

Philip looked at him with a sudden appreciation of the villainy that had lured him to such a lonely, isolated spot. Fool that he had been to have imagined that Marcella would have appointed such a place for a meeting! His heart contracted at the thought of what Marcella must be enduring, while he was unable to protect her. Something of what he was thinking flickered in his face, for Edward Day said mockingly:

"Don't fear for Marcella; she is quite well and, I think, happy."

"You have seen her, then, lately?" Philip said quickly.

The other laughed. The curate's question proved that he had had no opportunity of seeing the girl who had escaped his and Sir Cyprian's clutches. "Oh, yes—I have seen her; quite recently. She is resigned to the prospect of becoming my wife," was the sneering reply.

Philip's face flushed angrily. "I understand—that telegram was sent by you. You got me here by a lie—for what purpose?"

"For the purpose of getting back a little of what I owe you, Mr. Nullius!" was the fierce retort. "The chalking up has been a long time on my slate, but I intend to wipe it clean of the debt now—you understand? If you want to fight—I'll give you a chance—but only one of us shall leave the 'Point' alive!" and he laughed, a low, cunning note that sent the blood ebbing from Philip's face. He could no longer fail to grasp the awfulness of his position. He, a clergyman of the Church of England, was compelled to fight for his life on a bleak, desolate rock, with a man whose hatred for him had reached the height of madness. He made one final effort to argue with the man whose gleaming eyes were lit with the fever of lust, and whose pale face was like unto that of a devil.

"Why should you hate me so, Day? Good God, man, you can't wish to murder me in cold blood!"

"Why do I hate you? Why do I wish you dead more than any other man on earth? Well, I'll tell you. It is because you have scored where I have failed, because without an effort you won the love of the one woman whom I wanted, and—and—you stand in my way as no other man does; money, position and power wait for me behind your back, you—you——"

He stopped abruptly. Philip Nullius was staring at him in amazement, not unmixed with fear.

"Come," the curate said, after a pause, "I don't understand what you mean; but I only realise that I am forced to defend myself from a madman!"

He flung his hat and coat on the hard ground, and faced his enemy. "I am ready," he said briefly, with set lips and steady eyes, and to himself he murmured: "Oh, God! help me, for Marcella's sake!"

The next moment Edward Day had flung himself upon the man whom he had hated so long and secretly, and whom, since he had learnt the secret from Sir Cyprian, he both feared and loathed most bitterly. For were Philip Nullius but dead, he would then be certain of the position that Sir Cyprian had told him he would reveal when he should return—alone, from Danger Point!

"Ah!" he gasped hoarsely. "At last, Philip Nullius; the sun has set for you, and to-morrow it will rise for me!"

Then his strong, wiry arms clasped like a vice round the more athletic figure of the man who was of the same blood as that which ran in his veins, and it was the lust of Cain that suddenly seized Edward Day in its clutches.

Both men fell, the curate for the moment had a brief advantage over his infuriated assailant, then, with a cunning look in his blue eyes, Edward Day sprang at his throat with his strong, hands, and attempted to drag him towards the edge of the cliff. Throwing all his strength into one

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desperate effort, Philip struck a well-directed blow with his doubled-up fist at the fair, boyish brow so close to his, and with a muffled cry Edward Day released his hold, and fell back, his head striking heavily against a piece of loose stone that had once been a portion of a rock.

Philip leant over him anxiously. Little as he understood the motive for the assault upon him, and attaching no significance to the half-maddened words that had dropped from Day's lips, he was still glad that he could feel the heart-beats of the unconscious man, who had intended to kill him.

As he rose from his knees he kicked something bright that was lying on the ground, and had evidently fallen from the other man's pocket when in the heat of their struggle. Though it was almost dusk, he saw that it was a locket, and something in the shape of it aroused his interest. He had another such locket in his possession at that moment. As his fingers touched the spring, he uttered an exclamation, for on one side was the face of a beautiful woman, and on the other, where there was no likeness, he saw by the aid of a match which he struck, the two words in a clear girlish hand—"From 'Cabel'!"

His hand shook, and his brain reeled under the sudden shock of knowledge that came upon him.

"Cabel!" That was the mysterious signature of those letters that had been stolen from him some time ago. Surely, the similarity between the two lockets must be a link in that hidden chain he had so long been trying to piece together. The word "Cabel" was an uncommon one; the writing was like that on the letters! It was more than coincidence—it went deeper than supposition! The man from whose coat the locket had fallen knew something—he——

"Ah!" he groaned in bitterness of spirit as the truth burst upon him. The brother who had lain as a baby with himself in that unknown mother's arms, and for whom he had prayed, and hoped to find, was one and the same as the treacherous backbiter who had lured him on to Danger Point with the object of killing him, of shedding the blood of the man who was his brother!

For a few moments he stood motionless, then rousing himself he picked up the coat he had flung on the ground, and covered the body of the unconscious man who lay at his feet. Then he turned, and with a white, set face made his way down to the beach.

"I must find someone to take him away! I will risk everything and go to the Court!" he muttered. "*Perhaps* I shall see Marcella." Just then a shadow darted up from under his feet and disappeared before he noticed more than that it was that of a man. He turned and looked back anxiously, but the shadow had vanished into thin air.

"He will be safe up there," he murmured again, "and I shall not be long—my brother!"

FIFTY-SECOND CHAPTER.
On the Scent.

"Will you come with us, sir? The picture will be there, as no efforts have been made to move it. They are a dangerous gang and we are taking special precautions to see that none of them are likely to escape. Most of them are 'wanted' by the police, and have been difficult to trace, owing to the cleverness of their leader; but now we have practically drawn a cordon round them, and by to-night shall have the whole lot under lock and key."

Mr. Johnson frowned. Had the offer come at any other time he would have hailed it with delight, but it interfered with him just as he was on the point of going to the succour of his son—the son he dared not claim, but whom he meant to see standing in his proper place. He had some time ago read a copy of the late Sir Basil Wingate's will at Somerset House, and saw that his son was not excluded from his inheritance, as at first he had thought was the case. But now that he had decided to go and save Philip from the treachery the anonymous telegram had said was threatening him on Danger Point, he was confronted by the detective from Scotland

A Husband's Good Advice.

It is commonly said, when one complains of indigestion, that "nobody should eat anything which disagrees with him"; but there is little sense in that remark. It is like saying that no man should be allowed to go into the water until he has become an expert swimmer. What one person can digest with ease will often cause in another all the miseries of dyspepsia; and it is not easy to learn who are the lucky and who the unlucky ones except by experiment. Besides, sufferers from indigestion are to be found among the most temperate, self-denying people, who exercise the utmost care in their choice of diet. "At one time I suffered very much from indigestion," says Mrs. Golder, of the Lodge, Barden Park, Barden Road, Tonbridge. "I had almost constant pain at the stomach, and in my back between the shoulders. I was always distressed by wind, while the headaches I endured were simply dreadful. A feeling of depression was constantly upon me, which no effort of my will could overcome. These troubles, and a complete want of appetite, quickly reduced me to a condition of extreme weakness. Then it was that I first proved the great value of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I was advised to try that medicine by my husband, who some years before had been cured of dyspepsia by it. The first few doses gave me relief at once, and after a little patience and regularity in its use I was restored to perfect health. At another time I was attacked by pleurisy, when I found that indigestion is not the only complaint that Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup is good for. Using it for the second time, I was entirely relieved of this new trouble; and that, too, after a doctor, who had attended me for a long time, had quite failed to do me any good."

In every land and in all climates people may be found with experience similar to that of Mrs. Golder. Composed of roots, and herbs, with no mineral admixture whatever. Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup is a purely vegetable tonic. It creates fresh, pure blood, and assists food to nourish, thus enabling nature to do its own work in its own way. For thirty-five years it has been the favourite remedy in the sixteen principal countries of the world, and it maintains its proud position amid a host of rivals because of its proved merit. Nothing else is "just as good," nor anything like so good; and the world recognises that fact.

A Way They Had in Egypt

Until comparatively recent times, in Egypt when a man refused to work, or failed to work as fast as his overseer thought proper, they lashed him with whips until he either mended his pace or died. If he died they laid him aside and put another labourer in his place. And so the game went on. It was a simple and effective plan, but the spread of intelligence has made it unpopular. There are times, the liver being sluggish, when even the most industrious of us cannot work. Then it is one should resort to Mother Seigel's Syrup. That feeling of oppression at the chest, and pain between the shoulders after eating; that drowsiness and headache; all proclaim you are unable to digest your food. And until you alter that by taking Seigel's Syrup, it is as useless to expect relief as to try to grow figs on gooseberry bushes. "Mother Seigel's Syrup has done me more good than all the doctors I ever consulted," says Mrs. Lancaster, of 3 Mill Road, Leighton Buzzard. "I suffered for years from chronic indigestion, and gradually became low and depressed. My appetite completely left me, and I suffered much from spasms caused by wind accumulating round my heart. I also suffered severely from constipation, but a few bottles of Mother Seigel's Syrup completely restored me to perfect health."

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Yard, bound for Leyton, where the police had reason to believe the missing picture was concealed in Water Grange.

"You are quite certain my recognition of the picture will be sufficient?" he asked hastily. "I—I have a most urgent message calling me to Crawley."

The man looked at him for a moment. "Ah! Crawley. That's where Sir Cyprian Rust lives, is it not, sir? Yes, I think your identification of the picture is all we shall require now. You see, the picture is the peg upon which we are hanging a great deal afterwards; once the ring-leader of that gang is collared, hundreds of other charges will come up. My junior has been quietly on the job some days now, and unless I am very much mistaken, or something wonderful happens in the meantime, the 'Spade' will relinquish his disguise for a more public character."

Hastily dispatching a telegram to Lady Violet, informing her of his change of plans for the moment only, and assuring her and Marcella of his devotion, Caleb J. Johnson—the man whose own secret was weighing heavily upon him—made a silent journey in the society of the bluff, cheerful-looking man from Scotland Yard. The news of the financier's fall from the places of the great in City circles had not yet become public property. He had done nothing that put him within the jurisdiction of the law. The companies in which he had always taken the lead had been properly wound up; he had taken good care when the crash came to meet it honourably, and his own money had gone to make good the losses. The hand that had struck at him in the dark was, he knew, that of his ex-secretary, Edward Day, the clever rogue whose forgeries he had been afraid to denounce, and who rose in the financial firmament as he, the older veteran, had gone down.

As they were driving towards Water Grange, he spoke suddenly to the detective. "Why are we going to this place? I thought it was owned by a respectable member of society?" He did not add that he had entertained a very different opinion himself.

The detective laughed. "Every house is respectable, sir, until it is proved otherwise."

Arriving at the house, it looked desolate, and the whole place had an appearance of being uninhabited.

The two men rang and knocked loudly, but no one hurried to obey the peremptory summons of the law.

An old gardener, who had been weeding a piece of waste ground, approached, and said swiftly:

"There has been no sign of anyone about since I came down yesterday. I've watched, and so has Jakes, and it's my belief that they have cleared. Some accomplice got wind of it and tipped them the cue, that's evident."

"Ah!" and a frown ruffled the senior's brow. "At any rate, Huckle, we'll just enter and satisfy ourselves that the place is empty. This gentleman is Mr. Johnson."

An entrance was forced into the desolate house, and in spite of his anxiety concerning the son he loved, the ex-financier experienced a thrill of curiosity as he followed the two men into the hall.

"What's that?" one of them whispered sharply, as they stood at the top of a flight of stairs, after having made an investigation of the top part of the house. "I heard a cry that came from somewhere down those stairs; we have not been into all the rooms yet."

A few moments sufficed for the doors of the basement rooms to be opened by the three men, now keenly alive to the knowledge that there was someone imprisoned. The last door was forced open, and truly enough the cry that had filtered up through the darkness came from the figure on a mattress.

"Why, it's a woman!" burst from them simultaneously.

They bent over the form, and one of the men struck a match and lit a tiny gas jet. At the sight of the face of the almost fainting woman Mr. Johnson uttered a cry of amazement. It was, in spite of the ravages of want, suffering and despair, the face of a woman he had seen somewhere, but he could not locate the time or place.

A little brandy from a flask brought a slight flush to the white face, and the blue eyes opened hazily.

"Who are you, and where are the others?" the detective said sharply.

"The others!" she laughed weakly. "They left me here, with enough bread and water to keep me alive for a few days. They locked me in and for three days I have been alone! Have they gone, then?"

"Yes. I have a warrant for the arrest of a man concerned in the robbery of a valuable picture," was the terse reply. "Can you give me any information concerning the men who lived here, and why you are deserted by them?"

A curious light flickered in her eyes. "They were a set of rogues and vagabonds. I am sorry to say I am the daughter of the man they call the 'Vicar.' I came here in order to save another woman whom they thought they had decoyed"—here Mr. Johnson started and began to follow the thread of the words intently. "When they found that I had outwitted them they were furious, and in revenge left me here; but I have paid them back—cheated them of their prey!"

"What's your name?" the representative of the law said curtly.

"Lottie Haste—no!" she laughed bitterly. "I will tell you my married name. I am Mrs. Edward Day, the wife of the fiend who deserted me, and only failed to murder me because he did his work so clumsily!"

The financier started forward. He remembered the occasion when he had seen that fair, scornful face before. But then it had worn an expression of tenderness and joy. It was when he had passed in a hansom, and had seen her gazing at Edward Day, who was coming out of a house in Guilford Street. And she was the wife of the young ruffian who had dared to make love to Marcella Rust—no—Marcella Frayne-Lennox, as he now knew her name to be.

"Where did this man Day—your husband—go to?" the detective said quickly.

She laughed weakly. "A wife is not supposed to give evidence against her husband, is she? But I can tell you this"—she raised herself and said hurriedly, "he has gone to do harm to one who has never wronged him—on Danger Point, Crawley! I bribed a boy to send a telegram to some one in London, but God knows whether it has done any good! Go! go!" she pleaded wildly. "What you seek I feel sure you will find at Crawley—only make haste; while you wait here perhaps murder is being done. I did my best—I tried to stop it!" then, with a sigh, she fell breathless on to the mattress.

Mr. Johnson moved towards the door. Her words had aroused his fever of anxiety. "Perhaps murder was being done—or had been done!"

"Wait, sir, please!" the detective said quickly. "This woman may be of use to us in identification. We must take her with us; would you mind telling the driver of the carriage to come round to the door while we carry her up?"

When the financier had departed the detective bent over the girl eagerly. "Tell me who the other man was—and who was with him?"

Raising her head, she murmured a few words in his ear. He drew back sharply. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," was the faint reply. "I know positively."

He smiled grimly; then, aided by his junior, carried the girl up the stairs, out to the closed trap where Mr. Johnson sat, deep in thought.

"We are going to Crawley, sir; do you still wish to go there also?"

"I do," was the quiet reply.

"Then we shall travel together, if you have no objection, sir."

"I shall be glad of company," Mr. Johnson answered grimly.

And the throbbing of the engine as the train bore them westwards beat out the refrain in the ex-financier's brain of "Philip! Philip! How shall I find you? Alive or murdered?"

(The conclusion of this serial will appear next week.)

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A Good Cycle

At a FAIR price is cheaper than a poor Cycle at ANY price. Buy the best and avoid risks.
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—"Times," 24-7-73.

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Should a Man Propose to a Friend?

"SHOULD a man marry a girl who is a mere friend?" This perplexes "ALGY." "I have known a girl for some years," he writes, "and we have seen a great deal of each other. We have been great chums, and like each other, but I have never uttered a word of love to her. At the same time, I believe she has much deeper feelings towards me than I have towards her. In this case, ought I to propose? Could a marriage between chums be a happy one?"

* * * * *

There is always something wrong, "ALGY," about a "chum" marriage. Friendship is not quite a strong enough ground on which to marry, as many and many have found before now. One may like a person ever so much, yet be utterly unmoved in the direction of love. To propose would be a risky experiment. Before doing anything of the kind, I advise you to get to know each other more intimately. If she loves you, as you suspect, perhaps in time you might reciprocate. But don't propose on the ground of mere friendship.

A Forced Engagement.

"I HAVE been walking out for several Sunday evenings with a girl, whose company I like very much," writes "A. W. N.," "and the way she greets me leads me to think she looks forward to the walk with as much pleasure as I do. But she is engaged to a man out in South Africa. This was brought about by her parents, and the girl wants to be released. Our ages are eighteen and nineteen."

* * * * *

You will have a difficult task. Evidently the girl's parents wish her to marry the gentleman in South Africa, and parents like that are often more powerful than kind. Before you attempt to persuade the girl to break off her engagement, or move in the matter, you must reach a deeper stage in her affections than merely "liking her company." When you and she have reached the point of devotion—if you ever do—and both feel that life without the other would be a misery, then take steps to dissuade the parents from insisting on the other marriage. But at present, not being exactly in love with each other, you have not a very stong case. Besides, if the girl really does not wish to marry the other man, surely she herself has the power to break off the engagement?

'Twixt Mother and Sweetheart.

"ERIC" writes: "I am twenty years old, and have had a sweetheart for the last four years." (This is beginning young, 'ERIC.") "I have also a parent (mother) and little sister dependent on me. Although I care very much for my sweetheart, I am not at present able to marry. My salary is very small, and I have no particular prospects. Would it be best to break off the engagement, as there is nothing very encouraging for her to look forward to?"

This is a very sensible letter. I am glad that "ERIC," unlike many of my correspondents, has a nice, generous feeling towards his mother and sister, who, after all, have prior claim on his work to any a sweetheart can have. So long as "ERIC" has to support his mother, he should certainly postpone marriage, at any rate until his prospects improve. I do not see he need break off the engagement. Cannot he and his sweetheart come to a sensible understanding? Would she be willing to wait three years? If so, he must make a great effort to improve his position. After all, a young man of his age should never let himself think he has no prospects in life. An intelligent, persevering youth should surely be able to improve his position in that time. If not, then I fear he is not the sort of man to take a wife.

A Test of Love.

"GERTRUDE" is engaged to a young man, and both truly love each other. She has been engaged a month, and had only known him five months previously. "GERTRUDE" has now learnt that, before making her acquaintance, the young man had compromised himself with another girl, who now threatens him with legal proceedings. Under the circumstances, what is "GERTRUDE'S" duty? Should she break off the engagement? "He is dearer to me than my own life," she says, "and, in any case, ought I to forgive him?"

* * * * *

I do not see that you have anything to forgive. His offence was not against you, as you admit that you did not know him at the time he was paying attentions to the other girl. As you confess your deep love for him, obviously you should prove it by standing up for him should the legal difficulty arise. Most women forgive a lover for any wrong, provided it is not against themselves. Don't call yourself "broken-hearted." You are not the only woman who has had to stand a test of her love for a man.

Jealous of Fiance's Patients.

"ROSA" is engaged to a doctor. He has many lady patients, but always refuses to say anything about them when questioned by "ROSA." Does this mean that he may have other love affairs? Would it be wise for "ROSA" to continue her engagement?

* * * * *

"ROSA" is too suspicious. Surely she must know that a doctor's professional etiquette prevents him from saying anything at all about his patients, even to his sweetheart or wife, especially his lady patients? Let "ROSA" get this silly idea out of her head, and understand that a doctor bears an entirely different relation towards the opposite sex, and that he has lady patients does not in the least mean that he he will be unfaithful to his betrothed. If all doctors' sweethearts and wives were as suspicious as "ROSA," theirs would be a troublesome existence, and it is worrying enough already.

A Girl who Gives Presents.

"FORLORN" is very worried because he is acquainted with a girl who is very much attached to him, but for whom he does not care at all. The girl is always giving him presents, and evidently thinks that it is "FORLORN'S" intention to marry her. As this is just what he does not intend to do, he asks my advice as to what course he had better pursue.

* * * * *

I advise "FORLORN" to tell the lady frankly that he does not love her, unpleasant as this task undoubtedly will be. Also acquaint the girl's parents of this fact, and they will probably cease to encourage her in running after him.

Cynthia

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FROM

A Lecture on Cocoa

BY

DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

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Headache

SOMETIMES when things don't go right in certain parts of your body you feel the effect in your head. When you've got headache, it doesn't necessarily mean your head is wrong. Headache is very often only a symptom of disorder elsewhere. Look somewhere else for the mischief, and correct the cause not the symptom.

Is the headache in the forehead, and does it cease if you press it? If so, that's neuralgic headache. Is it in the forehead, or on one side of the head only? If so, it's what doctors call "megrim"; and arises from want of tone in the system. Is it general and accompanied by sickness, foul breath, constipation, &c.? If so, it's a bilious headache, and arises from excessive secretion of the bile. All these headaches are traceable, you see, either to stomach weakness, which lets the system get run down (resulting in neuralgia or megrim), or to liver disorder, which deranges bile secretion and causes bilious headaches. Bile Beans act directly on liver and stomach. That's how they cure headache. They cure headache, which is only a symptom, by correcting the disorders which cause it.

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